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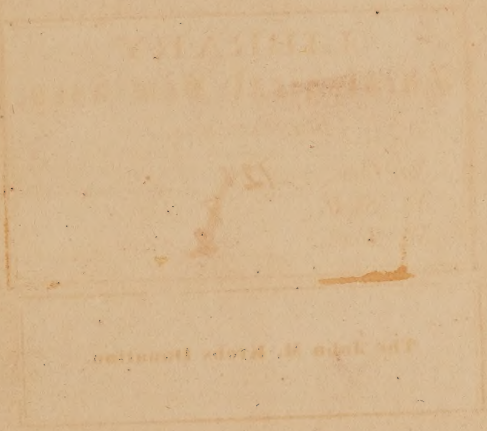

THE

MYSTERY

OF

GODLINESS,

WHEREIN THE

DEITY OF CHRIST IS PROVED

UPON NO OTHER EVIDENCE THAN THE WORD OF GOD, AND WITH NO OTHER VIEW THAN FOR THE SALVATION OF MEN.

BY THE

REV. THOMAS BRADBURY.

Know that for THY SAKE I have suffered rebuke. Thy words were found, and I did eat them, and thy Word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; for I am called by THY NAME, O Lord God of Hosts.—JER. xv. 15, 16.

VOL. I.

PHILADELPHIA:

PRESBYTERIAN BOARD OF PUBLICATION.

JAMES RUSSELL, PUBLISHING AGENT.

1840.

PHILADELPHIA.
WM. S. MARTIEN, PRINTER.

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PREFACE.

TO THE CONGREGATION AT FETTER-LANE, AND THOSE WHO ATTEND THE LORD'S DAY EVENING LECTURE AT SALTER'S HALL.

THE doctrine of the ever-blessed Trinity was never known, till very lately, to be matter of debate among Protestant dissenters. Our fathers universally owned it, with reverence and a godly fear; and the generation who have risen up to deny it, appear to act from a new spirit, as well as upon a new scheme; as if that which had always the chief place among articles of faith, was now to be lifted up in scorn, and pursued with banter instead of argument. I shall have no regard at present to the ungenerous oppositions that have been made to the cause by exclamations about charity, reviling confessions, and making a subscription to the faith, which has been the constant practice of ministers ever since the Reformation, to be a brand of infamy. It was found the shortest way to amuse the world, and divert them from the only question they had before them, viz. whether the doctrine, as we have owned it, is revealed in the Bible or not. It is a great deal easier to load an opinion with the hard names of persecution, creed-making, and imposition, than to prove that it is an error.

We have endeavoured that our faith may spread abroad, to be seen and read of all men, in a well known confession, that "There is but one only living and true God; and, that there are three persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory."

The proposition is complex, and can neither be defended nor baffled, in any other way than by taking the several doctrines apart, which are plainly these five.

I. "That there is but one only, the living and true God." This we affirm, not only upon the principles of reason, but that "greater light" that rules the Church, the written Word. Therefore the charge of *Tritheism*, or owning of three Gods, would have been spared by any but such as have a contempt of modesty, against those who confess no more than one. Under this glorious name of GOD we mean "a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth." And as this description belongs to the Most High alone, so we dare give the title, in that sense, to none besides him.

II. Another branch of our confession is, "that there are three persons in the Divine nature; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost." These are plainly distinguished; the Father is not the Son, nor the Son the Spirit. The liberty that some take to wrangle about the manner of the difference, whether it is specifical or numerical, only shows a vanity that would be wise, as if they thought to make an experiment whether God is incomprehensible. It is enough for us, that the Scripture mentions neither more nor fewer than three. We add, "that these three are one God." This is to be proved in parts, and therefore the next proposition is,

III. The Father is revealed, in his own book, under these glorious titles.

IV. The Son, and

V. The Holy Ghost, are declared in the names, attributes, operations, and honours, which we read of as arguments of eternal power and godhead.

Whether any of these doctrines are false or not, ought to be tried by taking it asunder from the rest. But if they are all true, that is, agree to the language of the Bible, then the general article is a fair conclusion from the whole, that "these three are the same in substance, and equal in power and glory." It is the fourth of these propositions that I have considered in the following sermons: First, As a revealed truth. Secondly, As an awful mystery. Thirdly, As an argument of practical holiness.

1. In proving the truth, that Christ, equally with the Father and Holy Spirit, is the Supreme God, I have honestly given a reason of the hope that is in me, by searching the Scriptures daily whether the things are so. The opinions of Fathers, councils, divines of all sorts, and indeed the whole body of the faithful, from Egypt even until now, has been well collected by others; but I have used none of these arguments, though I always read with pleasure by what a great cloud of witnesses we are encompassed; nor can I think it very modest, that they who have obtained so good a report through faith, should be treated with contempt by such as are far from being superior to them in learning or holiness. However, you are my witnesses, and so may the whole world be now, that I have pleaded no authority but that of Scripture. As I read, I believe; as I believe, so I speak. I can affirm, as Mr. Chillingworth did, that "THE BIBLE, THE BIBLE" is the rule of my religion, and of all that I either think or say about the Divinity of Christ. And I fear the memory of that great man is like to suffer, who was known so much to cry up the Bible, when the memoirs of his life

are furnished by those who cry it down. This doctrine is not maintained upon a scanty revelation; the evidence for it is not confined to two or three texts, but flows in all the stream of Scripture.

2. This I have also considered as a mystery. It is the familiar and darling word of the Holy Spirit, and therefore to treat it with contempt is talking without book. I found, that in this part of my work, I was come to the main pinch of the question; whether God has ever told us things that we could not have discovered without revelation, and that we cannot explain and comprehend with it; and if he has done so, whether we ought not to believe him upon his own word?

3. It was a thing of the greatest weight with me, that this is a doctrine of godliness. It appears so both in the book of God, and in the lives of men. Charity, humility, devotion, and universal benevolence, are not impaired by a belief of the Trinity; and, as we find by experience, they never grow upon an opposition to it; they are not Arian plants, as far as I can either hear or see.

I hope, as the providence of God led me into this subject, so his good Spirit has carried me through it. The sermons have been of service to myself, and to many of you that heard them; so that whilst I was imparting to you this spiritual gift, I have been established together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me. I have given some account of my preaching upon this text in the last sermon, and therefore I shall say no more in this preface upon that head.

I have heard the defaming of many since my zeal for this doctrine convinced them I was not to be brought into their measures, either to bury the truth, or to betray it. But some of you God has made to differ, by setting home upon your hearts the arguments that were so uneasy to them. They went out from us who were not of us, and by their going out it is manifest they were not all of us; but this vacancy has been more than filled up by several whom these very sermons were a means of bringing into our church, which had been a stone of stumbling to others. To those that perish, Christ is foolishness; but to them who are saved, he is the wisdom and power of God.

I can say upon this argument, what one, whom both the grace of God, and the wrath of man have made eminent in the Christian world. His last will and testament gives such an evidence of the witness he had within himself, that if I might but feel his joys, I could be content to succeed him in all the reproaches that were poured upon him from Popish and Socinian malice.

"I profess," says Calvin, "according to the measure of God's favour to me, that I have designed both from the pulpit and the press, to deliver his pure and uncorrupted word. And I also aver, that in all my disputes with the enemies of the gospel, I have used no crafty or deceitful methods, but gave myself up to an honest and open defence of truth. But, alas! my study and zeal (if it is fit to be called so) was so faint and languid, that I confess myself wanting in many things that were suitable to that noble cause."*

To this declaration in his last will, I will add what he does in some of his last words to the magistrates and ministers of Geneva.

"As to the doctrine which you have heard from me, I profess that I did not take it up in a hasty dubious way, but taught with sincerity the word of God; and had I acted otherwise, I should have as much feared his anger, as I now feel assured that my work in preaching has not displeased him. And this I take the greater liberty to declare before God and you, because I make no doubt but Satan, after his old way, will raise up wicked, unstable, and giddy men to corrupt the sincere doctrine that I have delivered among you."†

Through the Divine goodness, I can make this reflection on that ministry that I have received; and though innumerable follies have easily beset me, for which I desire to be humbled, yet for the space of above eighteen years in which I have been a pastor, and twenty years of my service in the evening lecture, I have never either denied a truth that appeared evident to me, or shammed one that I thought useful to you.

I recommend both you and the sermons that are now put into your hands, to the blessing of that Jesus for whose sake, and in whose cause so great a part of my life and strength has been spent among you.

* Profiteor, me sedulo pro modo gratiæ et benignitatis qua Deus erga me usus est, operam dedisse, ut cum in concionibus, tum etiam in scriptis, pure ac caste verbum ipsius prædicarem, et fideliter sacram ipsius scripturam interpretarer. Testor etiam ac profiteor, me in contentionibus et disputationibus omnibus, quæ mihi cum hostibus Evangelii habendæ fuerunt, nullis prætigiis, nullis malis artibus et sophisticis, usum esse; sed candide ac sincere in veritate propugnanda versatum esse. Verum, hei mihi! studium illud meum et zelus (si hoc nomine dignus est) adeo remissus et languidus fuit, ut innumera mihi ad munus meum præclare fungendum defuisse fateor.

† Quod ad doctrinam attinet quam ex me audistis, testor me non temere neque incerto, sed pure ac sincere verbum Dei mihi concreditum docuisse, cujus iram alioqui tam scirem huic capiti meo jamjam imminere, quam certus sum meos in docendo labores ei non displicuisse. Idque coram Deo et vobis eo libentius testificor, quod minime dubitem Satanam prout consuevit, improbos, leves, vertiginosos denique homines corrumpendæ quam ex me audivistis, sinceræ doctrinæ excitaturum.—*Calvini Vita.*

THE

MYSTERY OF GODLINESS.

CHAPTER I.

THE PILLAR AND GROUND OF TRUTH.

1 Timothy iii. 15, 16.—The pillar and ground of the truth. And without controversy great is the mystery of Godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

This Epistle was written to Timothy, "that he might know how to behave himself in the house of God, which is the Church of the living God." Ver. 14.

In the Old Testament, these two names are applied to different things. The 'house of God' was the place he had chosen; first the sanctuary, and then the temple. The 'church of God' was the people whom he had set apart for himself, the nation which he took out of the midst of another, Deut. iv. 34; these the martyr Stephen calls the church in the wilderness, Acts vii. 38. But in the New Testament the house of God is no other than his church or people. "He dwells not in temples made with hands," Acts vii. 48. Every particular believer "is the temple of the Holy Ghost," 1 Cor. vi. 19; and a society of them is that whole building that grows unto an holy temple in the Lord, Eph. ii. 21.

The connection of the next words, "the pillar and ground of truth," has disturbed the world with

volumes of argument, and rivers of blood. Some divines think, (and I own myself to be of their opinion), that here the apostle begins a new sentence, and what is placed at the end of this verse, should be the head of the next; and then we shall read it thus: The pillar and ground of truth is the mystery of Godliness, which is great without controversy, that God was made manifest in the flesh, &c. In this view I shall consider the text. But in order to clear the road, I must take some notice of the other opinions that many have contended for; and they are two.

I. That the church is the pillar and ground of truth. Several Protestant authors have explained this notion with a great deal of modesty, and say it signifies no more than that Christians in the New Testament have the custody of the Gospel, as to the Jews under the law were committed the oracles of God, Rom. iii. 2. Or, to express their beloved maxim in their own way, "there is no truth out of the church." Others imagine, that as the laws of several countries used to be published on pillars, where the people might read them, so the church is to make an open declaration, Luke i. 1, of the truth that God has revealed. It is certain that neither of these opinions can be denied. The churches of Christ have the Bible, and they ought to expose it; from them the word of the Lord is to sound forth, 1 Thess. i. 18.

But as those terms, "the pillar and ground of truth," are a noble character of something or other, so there are many who, when they apply it to the church, suppose a great deal more from it than I can. As, 1. That the church is to determine what is truth and what is error; as if our faith was to stand in the wisdom of men, and not in the power of God, 1 Cor. ii. 5. 2. That the evidence of any truth is owing to the authority of the church; whereas how great soever the ministers of the Gospel are, οἱ δοκοῦντες στῦλοι, though they are accounted to be these pillars, οὐδεν διαφέρει, it makes no odds, God accepts not the person of man, Gal. ii. 6, 9. 3. That the truth itself has no value, if the church denies her concurrence. So that the

belief of the whole mystery of Godliness shall not deliver a man from the brand of heresy.

Thus men talk who had rather have the dominion of our faith than be helpers of our joy. A great many other *hard sayings* are squeezed out of these words; but it is evident,

1. That by the church in this text, he does not mean only the ministers. The word never once carries that sense in all the New Testament. God set in the church apostles, prophets, and teachers, 1 Cor. xii. 28. And therefore, if the people, (who certainly are the church,) are the pillar and ground of truth, I believe it is more than the managers of this argument ever designed to prove by it.

2. It is far from concluding that one church is the pillar of truth to another. If this character is given of a church at Ephesus, what has that to do with one at Rome? But,

3. It is plain from all reason as well as Scripture, that truth is the pillar and ground of the church, and not the church of truth. We are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Eph. ii. 20, 21; and it is in Christ that the whole building is framed together. We are God's building; and they who are wise master builders, have laid a foundation, 1 Cor. iii. 9, 10, 11, but that is, and can be no other than Christ. When this foundation is destroyed, the church falls to the ground; their house will be left unto them desolate. That which compacts a society is, that our hearts are knit together in love, Col. ii. 2, and that which it is raised upon is, the acknowledgment of the mystery. If the churches depart from the truth as it is in Jesus, the few that have not defiled their garments, Rev. iii. 4, ought to withdraw, 1 Tim. vi. 5, and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, Eph. v. 11.

II. There are some who think that Timothy himself has these great titles given him. And in relief to their opinion, they suppose that a particle is wanting in the text; he is exhorted how to behave in the church ὡς *as* the pillar and ground of truth. This

compliment they pay not to his person, but to his office. They do not say it of him, because he knew the Scriptures, and did the work of an evangelist, making full proof of his ministry, and rightly dividing the word of truth, 2 Tim. ii. 15; iii. 15. Had these been the foundations of the character, we could let the names and the merit go together. But the reason of their ascribing these noble titles to Timothy is, because he was bishop of Ephesus, and so the glories belong not to the man but to the chair. They argue that his opinion ought to be decisive in all matters of faith, from the pre-eminence he had above the rest of the pastors. And thus are men setting up the ambition which the grace of God pulls down. It is apparent if this is said of Timothy, he that gives him the name, gives him instructions. He besought him to abide at Ephesus, 1 Tim. i. 3; he committed a charge to him, 1 Tim. i. 18; he bids him take heed to himself and to the doctrine, 1 Tim. iv. 16. He has left us no room to imagine, that any authority is crowded into these titles, or that it slides down from Timothy to all his successors, let them be never so vile and foolish, to the end of the world.

I shall here inquire into three things:

1. What is it that the apostle calls the pillar and ground of truth.

2. What the truth is that will be thus supported.

3. In what sense we are to understand these terms of pillar and ground.

1. What is the thing that he calls by these great names? My answer to this will lie in a narrow compass (because I have already discharged the interpretations that some are contending for) by showing how little reason there is to understand it of the church, and how much less of Timothy. I therefore think, that from the end of this verse he begins a new sentence. He had showed him in the former part of the chapter what sort of people bishops and deacons ought to be, ver. 2. 13; but still puts him in mind that the main design of a minister is to report the glad tidings of salvation. The particle Καὶ, AND,

in the beginning of the 16th verse, looks like a continuation of the former sentence, rather than a fresh discourse. I shall, therefore, understand the words in their connection to what comes after. That the pillar and ground of truth and the mystery of Godliness, which is great without controversy, is, that God was manifest in the flesh, &c. By this account we see that he speaks of the Christian religion,

1. In general characters,

2. In its main particular branches.

I. The general account that he gives of it, is under three heads.

1. It is the pillar and ground of truth, that all useful knowledge is raised and hung upon it.

2. Notwithstanding, it is mysterious, and greatly so without controversy.

3. It has a tendency to promote and exalt all practical religion; it is the mystery of Godliness. This, he says in general of the glorious Gospel of the blessed God that was committed to his trust, ch. i. 11.

II. In particular he lets us see that Christianity consists in the knowledge of Jesus. There are six articles of the great record:

(1.) His incarnation, he was *manifest in the flesh.*

(2.) His resurrection, he was *justified in the Spirit.*

(3.) His approbation above, he was *seen of angels.*

(4.) His method of revealing himself abroad, he was *preached unto the Gentiles.*

(5.) The success of this report, he is *believed on in the world.*

(6.) His reward for the service and suffering of death, he was *received up into glory.*

These are so many parts of the knowledge we have of him, and these three characters may be affirmed of them all. 1. They are the pillar and ground of truth. Every other opinion must have all its weight laid upon these, be consistent with them, and continually referred to them. 2. There is a mystery in every one of these. You may call the whole a chain of wonders. We are surprised as we go along. We could

never have known them but by the revelation of the Spirit, who searches all things, yea the deep things of God. We may place these words at the foot of the whole account, Blessed be the God of Israel, who only does wondrous things, Psal. lxxii. 18. 3. They are all of a practical nature. The person who receives them with a belief of the truth, and an astonishment in the mystery, will find the good of them in a life of duty. It is all according to Godliness, ch. vi. 3, as that takes in both the worship we pay to God, and the good works by which our light shines out before men.

I begin with the first general character of the Christian religion, and shall give my sense of the words in this proposition, that

"The doctrine or report of Christ Jesus which we have in Scripture, is the pillar and ground of truth."

All other notions are true or false, trivial or important, holy or polluted, as they are either concerned with this or remote from it. We want to know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified, 2 Cor. ii. 2.

Here we may inquire what that TRUTH is which the apostle speaks of. And you will easily see it must be confined to things that accompany salvation, Heb. vi. 9; or, as it is said in another place, whatever pertains to the kingdom of God, Acts i. 3. This is the grace and truth that came by Jesus Christ, John i. 17.

There is a truth of history that we take delight in; to know what is doing in distant countries, or has been done in former ages. But this is rather our entertainment than our concern.

There is a truth of argument; this is still more engaging, as it is the proper food of our reason. We have a power of thinking, trying, judging and approving; these are intellectual joys; when wisdom enters into thine heart, knowledge is pleasant to thy soul.

There is also a truth of conversation; which is what we call integrity. This appears with a beauty

to others, and leaves a calmness in our own souls. It is a satisfaction to think that the persons we deal with, are open and hearty to us, but it is more supporting to know that ourselves are so to them. An honest man will have greater pain in doing one deceitful action than in receiving a hundred.

Besides these, there are truths of philosophy, that have no concern with the doctrines of Christ Jesus. A man may either believe or reject them without any influence on his religion. It is all one to a Christian whether he thinks the earth or the sun moves. But the truth that our apostle means, is of another kind.

1. It is about the greatest concerns.
2. It comes with the fullest evidence.
3. It is always the same.
4. It is followed with the best effects.

1. The whole bulk of truth that stands upon the doctrine of Christ Jesus, is about the greatest concerns of human nature. Knowledge and interest are thrown together. To be wise is to be happy. They are food. We are nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine; wholesome medicinal words, ὑγιαίνοντες, 1 Tim. iv. 6; vi. 3. It is health to the soul.

Many of our studies are bare amusement; and yet with what an appetite do we catch at little probabilities as the ground of a darling opinion; and that about things that will make us never the better, whether we be right or wrong! They give no sweetness to this life and no assurance of another. Those learned men are justly admired who have seen the confusion of the old philosophy, and drawn out a more likely scheme. But if they could demonstrate all they say, it rises no higher than to give an entertainment. They may be sick and poor, vicious and ignorant of God, with all that knowledge. The Ephesians were skilled in curious arts, Acts xix. 19, walking in the vanity of their mind; but they were darkened in their understandings, and alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that was in

them, Eph. iv. 17, 18. Indeed, an acquaintance with the things of nature may be improved, as by some great men it is, to an admiration of the works of God; for in wisdom he has made them all, Psal. civ. 24. But those reflections are no part of the learning, nor do they always go along with it.

Now the doctrine of Christianity is to acquaint you with the method that God has taken for himself to be glorious, and you to be happy. That you may wait for his Son from heaven, even Jesus, who delivered us from the wrath to come, 1 Thess. i. 10.

You do not read that God was manifest in the flesh merely to be acquainted with the story, but that the love and kindness of our Saviour towards man may appear: to show us how, according to his mercy, we are saved by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Spirit, Tit. iii. 4, 5. All his enemies knew that he was made of a woman, and under the law, Gal. iv. 4, 5, but our concern in this is to see by what method we are redeemed from under the law, and receive the adoption of sons.

His being justified in the Spirit, the testimony given to him by the Holy Ghost, is more to us than a matter of fact. We believe in God who raised him from the dead, and gave him glory, 1 Pet. i. 21. These are all so many articles for the conviction of sinners, for the quieting of a wounded conscience, the building up of the weak, and the drawing on to Sion those who have set their faces thitherwards, that we being justified by his grace, may have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ; in whom we have access by faith into the grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God, Rom. v. 1, 2.

His being seen of angels, admired, adored, and obeyed by the armies of heaven, is more than a speculation. In their duty we see our own happiness; we argue from thence, that his throne is for ever and ever, Psal. xlv. 6; and those that worship him will be ministering spirits to all the heirs of salvation, Heb. i. 14.

That he was preached unto the Gentiles is the

means of bringing this salvation to us. That he is believed on in the world is our comfort; and if we have obtained the like precious faith, it is our life. That he was received up into glory is a security to our hope, for he went to his Father, and our Father, to his God, and our God, John xx. 17; and to them that look for him, he shall appear the second time without sin, to salvation, Heb. ix. 28.

So that this is truth indeed, not only evident, but important. Here is a doctrine contrived on purpose to let sinners know they are prisoners of hope. To make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, that from the beginning of the world was hid in God; Eph. iii. 9, that we have our κοινωνία, fellowship with, and our concern in.

Suppose any ingenious person has his head turned to mathematical studies, he is pleased to find what is in the bowels of the earth, the courses of nature, and the power of engines; but, if he sees that by these things his estate may be improved, if by that study he is capable of draining his mines, it entertains more than his curiosity. And so it is here. We do not only speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, but the hidden wisdom that was ordained before the world to our glory, 1 Cor. ii. 7. The knowledge we have by the Gospel is of things that are freely given to us of God, ver. 12. We consider his wisdom, his truth, his goodness, and his justice, as they cause their glories to shine out in our redemption. There is no part of this account but what is to make us easy in a world of cares, and happy in a world of light. For this truth dwells in us, and shall be with us for ever, 2 John 2.

2. This truth comes with the greatest evidence, and that is the testimony of God himself. We receive it with a veneration to these two attributes; his wisdom, that he knows the truth; and his purity, that he will tell it. A God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he, Deut. xxxii. 4; therefore, he who believes not, has made God a liar, because he believes not the record that he has given of his Son, 1 John

v. 10. But he that receives his testimony, has set to his seal that God is true, John. iii. 33.

There can be no greater reason for assenting to any proposition than this, that God has said it. "The words of the Lord are pure words," Psal. xii. 6. We are to take no man's opinion upon trust; for they may deceive us. We should bring their reason to the bar of our own. But in what the Lord saith, there must be an acquiescence, because his knowledge receives no error, and his truth declares none. "Let God be true and every man a liar, that he may be justified in his sayings," Rom. iii. 4. Do not call it the subjection and bondage of our minds, or the laying aside of reason. The great employment of that faculty is to inquire whether this is a divine revelation or not. If it is satisfied about that, it has gone far enough. There needs no more; for if I do not believe what I know to be revealed, I reproach the nature of God, who "is not a man that he should lie," and "in whom is no darkness at all," Num. xxiii. 19; 1 John i. 5.

Still all this while, remember, I am speaking of that which we are satisfied is *revealed*, not what vain men will call by that name. No doctrine of human invention has any concern in this argument. It may be true, but it has not the evidence I am now talking of. The Bereans are commended as "more noble" than those of Thessalonica, because they would take nothing upon trust from the very apostles, Acts xvii. 11. But then they did not set up their own reason against a divine authority, for "they searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so." If they found the doctrines in the Scriptures, it was enough; that one thing closed up the mind; they never brought the opinion down to reason, or examined whether it might be defended that way. The whole dispute and inquiry ended in this, that if God had said it, they must receive it. No matter whether it came within the comprehension of their own minds or not. They do not set reason as a judge upon God, whether he speaks right or wrong. They make no

trial of his wisdom, or his truth. The very examination is profane and impious; it is going beyond the bounds of creatures, and breaking through to gaze, Exod. xix. 21.

If there is such a thing as revelation, it must be the highest evidence that a doctrine can ever have. All other knowledge leaves us short. We make some few discoveries, and we guess the rest. Observation lays the ground, and conjecture builds upon it. That is as far as any philosophy can go.

Knowledge and faith are usually thus distinguished. We are said to know things that we either see, or that appear to our own reason; we believe things upon the testimony or report of another. Now, it is without any foundation, that people give the preference to the opinions we have by knowledge, above those that come by faith. I can be as fully persuaded of the truth of a thing by report, as I can by observation. I have no more doubt, that there is a such place as Rome, than that there is a city called London, and yet all the evidence I can have of the former is the testimony of others. I believe it, because persons tell me so. This principle is admitted into all the business of life, and shall it have no place in religion, where the report comes from a "God that cannot lie?" Tit. i. 2.

Methinks the apostle was aware that this sort of reasoning would creep into the world, and therefore he lays in for it; "If we receive the witness of man, the witness of God is greater, for this is the witness that God hath testified of his Son. He that believes in the Son of God hath this witness in himself," 1 John v. 9, 10, i. e. there is something in his reason that bears him out in his faith; for he believes it, because God has said it. If I tell you that the moon is much less than the earth, and the sun much larger, that the stars move in such an orbit or circuit, and that the earth turns round, it is very likely these things are true. Probability is the highest that sort of learning can go. But if ever God had told me any of these notions, I should have known them better. Well, it

is upon this evidence that we say "God was manifest in the flesh." What we declare to you is τὸ μαρτύριον, the testimony of God. Here are "immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie;" and in these you have a strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before you, Heb. vi. 18.

3. This truth is always the same. There are "divers and strange doctrines," but "Jesus is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever," Heb. xiii. 8, 9. The degrees of revelation may vary, as we know they have done. The discovery of his purpose towards man has been as the "shining light;" it burst out of thick darkness at first; and when the eyelids of the morning were open, it shone "more and more unto a perfect day." But still the speaker and the message are the same. He "who at sundry times and in divers manners, spake in times past unto the fathers, by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by his Son," Heb. i. 1.

Whether Christ was to be *known* in a promise or in types, in the flesh or in the spirit, was determined by the several dispensations mankind were under. But, that he was to *come* among us, and work out an eternal redemption, is a doctrine as old as paradise. It is no new discovery, that mercy was to be glorified in making salvation a gift, and justice in making it a purchase. Adam knew this as well as we, when he was told that the "seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head," Gen. iii. 15. It is the same in substance with what we read afterwards, that "through death he might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil," Heb. ii. 14. A faith upon these principles was a long while in the world before what we now call Christianity: by this Abel "offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain," Heb. xi. 4; not merely by fear, love, and duty, but "by faith."

This perpetuity of an opinion is what no philosophy can pretend to. Several notions that are now received with credit, would have been thought monstrous in

former ages. Nothing can be more opposite than the systems of our learned men and of those a thousand years ago, about the motion of the sun and the earth. It is certain in this case, the things are the same; the sun and the earth took just that unvaried course then, that they do now; only people have got another way of thinking about them. And perhaps following generations may lay aside our principles, as we did theirs that have gone before us. Such a floating, rolling, shifting thing is human wisdom.

But in religion we declare to you "that which was from the beginning," 1 John i. 1. This truth has been confessed ever since God had a people in the world, and shall be so to the last breath of the last good man that will close the last age of time. For though "all flesh is as grass, and the glory of man as the flower of grass," it withers and fades away, yet "the word of the Lord endures for ever; and this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you," 1 Pet. i. 24, 25.

Some people tell us that the rules of church government alter; and indeed as far as they are human they must do so; for if men will determine by their own laws, what is decent or expedient, they should remember that "the fashion of this world passes away." But what God has given us is *for ever*. He has made changes in the methods of his worship, but he never made any in the doctrine of redemption. Whether he would be served by sacrifice and offerings, is not to be answered without a distinction: for as we can tell the time when they were required, so we also know "in burnt offerings he has no pleasure." But it was always true, that Christ should be the Saviour of his people. This was the same doctrine before the world began, that it shall be after it is ended. For "he was verily foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for us," 1 Pet. i. 20. If the old philosophers were to rise again, they must give their thoughts a new cast, and unravel the schemes which they had laboured with so much pain and pleasure too. But if righteous

Abel was to live among us, his religion would be just the same with ours; only he must approach to God by a Mediator without a sacrifice, as before he did with one.

4. This truth is attended with the most happy influence. There is something in the mind of man that makes it receive a notion with pleasure according to the degree of evidence. It strikes the soul as light does the eye. But of all wisdom that which relates to a future happiness is the most refreshing as well as the most important. "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free," John viii. 32. It unbinds the soul from the captivity of nature. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty," 2 Cor. iii. 17. God "sanctifies us by his truth, for his word is truth," John xvii. 17. A conviction of this, is like getting out of a dungeon: "Israel shall cry unto me, my God, we know thee," Hos. viii. 2.

Indeed it is like all other learning, very mean and insipid, to those that have it not. But when "the entrance of the word gives light, it makes wise the simple," it enlarges the heart, "for it is life eternal to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom he has sent," John xvii. 3. This must be an exception to what Solomon says, "In much wisdom is much grief, and he that increases learning, increases sorrow," Eccl. i. 18. The reason of his maxim is plain, because the things themselves are "vanity and vexation of spirit." But when we survey the love of God towards men, the redemption that it presses to, the mysterious glory that it is folded in, these are things that will hold when creation is dashed in pieces. And therefore, we may look over them with joy. This will be the grand meditation of heaven. For the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow, are things that "the angels desire to look into," 1 Pet. i. 11, 12. Therefore an inquiry into them is bringing the work of the presence-chamber into the outer rooms, and beginning a little beforehand in that which shall be our employment for ever.

Our next inquiry is how we are to understand these

metaphors, when the doctrine of Christ Jesus is called "the pillar and ground of truth." There is a great variety of opinions that I meet with upon this head. For when a lively fancy is set at work to make the most of an allusion, we may have particulars enough.

Some think the words refer to the pillar of cloud and fire, which were both a protection and a guide to the Jews from Egypt till they came to Canaan. And indeed, that was a type of our Lord's presence with his church to the end of the world, and of the way that he takes in making known the truth. He leads us by his counsel, Psal. lxxiii. 24, he keeps us from falling, and will present us to himself with exceeding joy, Jude, 24, as the monuments of a care that is past, and the objects of a love that continues for ever. The doctrine of the Gospel answers the end of that moving pillar; it is "a wall of fire around about us, and the glory in the midst of us," Zech. ii. 5. "He creates upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night; for upon all the glory shall be a defence, Isa. iv. 5.

Others imagine that the apostle had in his eye what they call the Pillar of Coronation, which stood in the temple near to the place where their kings were crowned, 2 Kings xi. 14. But here the sense of the metaphor comes heavily in, and it is with much ado that these annotators apply it to the day of our Lord's espousals, the day on which "his mother crowned him," Cant. iii. 11.

There is another opinion that looks fairer to our reason, that the words refer to the two pillars in Solomon's Temple, 1 Kings vii. 21, one of which was called *Jachin*, i. e. he shall establish, and the other *Boaz*, in him, or in it, is my help. Either of these titles may be applied to the interests of religion, and the doctrine of the gospel. By the articles of truth it appears, that God has "established his mercy in the heavens," Psal. lxxxix. 2. His covenant is "ordered in all things and sure;" 2 Sam. xxiii. 5; and in that is our help. "The Lord has founded Zion, and the

poor of his people shall trust in it," in that contrivance. "The foundation of God stands sure, having this seal, That he knows them that are his, 2 Tim. ii. 19. This covenant is "all our salvation and all our desire."

But lastly, some think the apostle alludes to the use of pillars in the heathen temples, there being a magnificent one at Ephesus. On these they wrote their laws, here they painted their gods, and from hence they exposed the images of their great men. The doctrines of the gospel serve to all these purposes. Here we have our laws. The grace of God that brings salvation, teaches us to deny ungodliness and wordly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, Tit. ii. 11, 12. Here also we see as much as we can do of our God, who "dwells not in temples made with hands, neither is worshipped as though he needed any thing." Acts vii. 48—xvii. 25. The design of Christianity is to give us "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," 2 Cor. iv. 6. Again, in this Revelation, we have our heroes; "By faith the elders obtained a good report," "We are compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses," and are "followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises," Heb. xi. 2.—xvii. 1.—vi. 12. Here the righteous are had "in everlasting remembrance," Psa. cxii. 6. Whenever the gospel is preached, the things that they have done are spoken in memorial of them.

But, not to vex the metaphor, and lose ourselves in the chase of so many allusions, the doctrine of Jesus Christ, the report we have of him, may be called the "Pillar and Ground of Truth;" as it is the most important of all truths, as it ought chiefly to be contended for, as other truths are built upon it, and have a tendency to it, and as it has the best influence upon the holiness and comfort of our souls.

1. The things laid down in the next verse are the most important of all truths. It is the record that God has given us of his Son; "This is the record, that

God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son," 1 John v. 10, 11. We have all our concern in them. "This is the true God and eternal life," ver. 20. The question that the disciples of John the Baptist came with to our Lord, was the greatest that could ever engage the thoughts of men, "Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?" Mat. xi. 3. It was with a view to God "manifest in the flesh" that the worthies of the Old Testament took so much pains in going to the temple, and were at all that expense in journeys and burnt-offerings. This was the hope of Israel, "to which the twelve tribes instantly serving God day and night hoped to come," Acts xxvi. 7. For this our Lord came into the world, not merely to explain the law, and be a swift witness Mal. iii. 5, against his enemies, but to bear his testimony that God had sent him. John "bare witness to the truth," and the Father bare witness of him, nor could that people have his word abiding in them, who believed not in him whom he had sent. John v. 33, 37, 38.

You see that his empire consisted in the knowledge of this: when he owns himself before Pilate to be a king, he adds, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth; every one that is of the truth hears my voice," John xviii. 37. Whatever he said might be called the truth, for in his lips was found no guile; but what he gives that title to with all this eminence is the discovery that he made of himself. This is our report; the thing we are to carry abroad. When he pleads his very miracles, it is "that we may know and believe that the Father is in him, and he in the Father," John x. 38.

It is a satisfaction to see how the word and the providence of God are tallying to one another; that so many ages have rolled away between the first breath of the promise, and the full life of the blessing, and yet it all came right. He brought Israel out of Egypt 430 years after he had promised it, *to a day*, Exod. xii. 41. He restored them from Babylon 70 years

after the time of their captivity, and gave them "an expected end." But the coming of that Lord, "of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write," John i. 45, is the grand article of his "faithfulness, which shall be established in the very heavens," Psal. lxxxix. 2. "He that receives this testimony hath set to his seal that God is true," John iii. 33. He is called "the Consolation of Israel," Luke ii. 25, as if they had waited for nothing else. Seeing him was enough. Good old Simeon delivered himself on that occasion like one who had got his fill of life, and had no more to stay for in this world: "Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel," Luke ii. 29—32.

The period when this happened is called "the fulness of time," Gal. iv. 4; as if all things in nature and providence had conspired to make that the fittest opportunity, the "due time," Rom. v. 6, according to which, κατὰ καιρὸν, he came and "died for the ungodly." Jacob is thought to place too much of his affection upon one son; when he hears that he is lord of Egypt, he exclaimed, "It is enough, Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die," Gen. xlv. 28. He uses the same excess of language at their meeting: "Now let me die, since I have seen thy face;" as if he thought his life was saved for nothing else but this interview, and that every other mercy would be flat and low after such an entertainment. This perhaps might be criminal in him; but there is no danger in the case before us. We cannot overdo it in admiring "the love and kindness of God our Saviour towards man," Tit. iii. 4. He speaks of himself as the great bounty of heaven. Thus saith he to the woman of Samaria, "If thou hadst known the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water," John iv. 10. Every thing was the gift of God; Jacob had owned that very well to be so, many ages before: but he

takes the name in a sense that can never be equalled when it is applied to any thing else, and we may say, "Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift," 2 Cor. ix. 15.

2. This is a truth that we are to contend for. "If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?" Psal. xi. 3. There are several doctrines that we deduce from these. Some people see the connection, and others do not. We may dispute with mutual forbearance, and be as easy to the mistakes of our brethren as we are to their tempers; but an error that saps the foundation, that digs up the ground of truth, is not to be endured without letting all tumble into ashes. In this case knowledge and happiness go together. There is an ignorance with which there can be no religion; and therefore when the apostle Jude gave all diligence to write about "the common salvation," it was needful for him to exhort them that they "should earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints," Jude 3.

There are two things that I would observe to you as the matter of this same zeal that he calls for. 1. That it is not for any thing later than primitive Christianity, a faith *once* delivered to the saints, not to be established upon the authority of future councils. He that is able to receive their dictates, let him receive them, and he that does not like them, may let them alone without any great danger to his soul. And, 2. By this faith he means, not every particular doctrine, but the main articles of our religion. As for example, one thing that Christ revealed was, that there is "nothing unclean of itself;" "not that which goeth into the mouth, defileth a man." Mat. xv. 11. Every creature of God is good, and to be received with thanksgiving; 1 Tim. iv. 4; but, "if any man esteems any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean," Rom. xiv. 14. Now, I am not called to contend earnestly with such a one; though I may think him in the wrong, yet I leave him "to his own master;" I am to "receive him, but not to doubtful disputations," Rom. xiv. 1; I that eat, am not to "des-

pise him that eats not." But you will learn what this faith is, by the errors that in the next verse are opposed to it; "turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ," Jude 4. The phrases used here, and in other parts of this epistle, show that it is the same case which Peter had spoken of, who tells us of some who "bring in damnable heresies, denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction," 2 Pet. ii. 1. This is undoing all at once.

Whatever opinion struck at this doctrine, that "God was manifest in the flesh," is exposed to the horror of the people. They used to run up their accounts of truth to this one point: "Hereby know we the Spirit of God; every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God; and every spirit that confesses not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God; and this is the spirit of Antichrist, whereof ye heard that it should come, and even now already is in the world," 1 John iv. 2, 3. He had told them in a former chapter, "Ye have heard that Antichrist should come, and there are many Antichrists," Ch. ii. 18, 19. He speaks of these as going out from them, by which it appears, that they once held communion with the people of God; but there is now a bar between them, a distinction that is never to be made up; "Ye know the truth and that no lie is of the truth," ver. 21. The meaning is not, that every good man is above mistakes; but there is a certain error or lie that is opposite to the whole truth of the gospel, and will be eternally inconsistent with it: "Who is a liar, but he that denies that Jesus is the Christ? he is Antichrist that denies the Father and the Son," ver. 22. He pursues the charge through another epistle; "Many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an Antichrist," 2 John 7. Upon this he saith, "Whoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, has not God; he that abideth in the doctrine of Christ,

has both the Father and the Son; if any man come to you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your your house, neither bid him God speed," ver. 9, 10. So that all this while you see, he is not recommending the private notions of men, nor indeed those truths of God that are of a lower nature; but the titles of "Deceiver" and "Antichrist" are given to those who had shattered the whole frame of Christianity, by taking away the foundation.

3. Other truths are built upon this, and have their tendency to it. Whatever else we insist on, as part of the counsel of God, yet still we are led hither as the ground of all. Ministers have "a dispensation to fulfil the word of God." The thing that we would make known is the "riches of the glory of this mystery," "which is Christ in you or among you, the hope of glory, whom we preach," Col. i. 25, 27, 28. In this one verse, ἐν ἔθνεσι is translated "among the Gentiles," and ἐν ὑμῖν, "in you." We have no more concern in the purpose of God, which he hid in himself before the foundation of the world, than as it refers to salvation. "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate, to be conformed to the image of his Son," Rom. viii. 29. "He has chosen us in him, that we should be holy;" Eph. i. 4, we obtain an inheritance, being predestinated according to his purpose.

Though it is a true notion that all things are foreseen and appointed by an infinite Mind, who is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever, yet it is all useless if you abstract it from religion. God has in our day "made foolish the wisdom of this world." The same persons have asserted fatality in the least actions of life, who deny predestination in the great affairs of eternity. As if God had determined I should move from one place to another on earth, but had left my getting to heaven as a thing loose from all decrees. Solomon saith in these cases, that "the legs of the lame are not equal." The parts of the notion are ill matched. What is it to me that every action of my life is fixed, that there is a necessity

upon me to do this thing and not another? Where is the benefit of an opinion that does but intoxicate; a fume of philosophy that gets into the head and makes us giddy? But take the doctrine of election as it stands in the Bible, that "God has from the beginning chosen some to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth," 2 Thess. ii. 13, and it is both the glory of an infinite agent, and the cordial of a thoughtful creature.

From this set of doctrines we argue a great many more. How does it appear, that we are "justified freely by the grace of God through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus," Rom. iii. 24, but from this, that he was manifest in the flesh? "For this purpose was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil," 1 John iii. 8. He was "made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons," Gal. iv. 4, 5. How does the apostle deal with those who denied the resurrection of the dead, but by reducing that doctrine to one of these fundamental principles? Thus he argues it out, that "if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? but if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen; and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching in vain and your faith in vain: Yea, we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God, that he raised up Christ, whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not," 1 Cor. xv. 12—17. You see that he brings in the resurrection of Christ as the leading article, and that by which we are to believe our own. Thus we are exhorted to a steadiness in the faith, "that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness of those who lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up unto him in all things, who is the Head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint

supplies, increases to the edifying of itself in love," Eph. iv. 14—16.

4. This truth has the most happy influence upon the soul, both as to holiness and comfort. In knowing him, we feel "the power of his resurrection, the fellowship of his sufferings, and are made conformable to his death," Phil. iii. 10. This gives us hope in our sorrow; "for, if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him," 1 Thess. iv. 14. What a company of useless notions have we contended for? In getting the victory we have only hugged a shadow, an imagination, that has no reality or substance in it. There is a "knowledge that puffs up;" what we gain by it "does not commend us to God," 1 Cor. viii. 1, 8. But if we know the truth as it is in Jesus, there is a change goes along with the conviction; we are "renewed in the spirit of our minds," Eph. iv. 23. "Learning Christ," is opposed to "committing uncleanness with greediness," ver. 19, 20. His coming in the flesh, being justified in the spirit, believed on in the world, and received up into glory, are the most powerful arguments to all religion.

The faith we have in such things, works by love; "the love of Christ constrains us," 2 Cor. v. 14; the love that runs through the several stages of his action συν χει ἡμᾶς, ver. 15, draws us to itself, by a sort of constraint that we cannot resist. And what is it that gives the love of Christ all this power over us? "because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead, and that he died, that they who live should not live unto themselves, but to him that died for them and rose again," 2 Cor. v. 15. The doctrine is, that Christ died. Every one knows that; but from this he scatters the seeds of humility and resolution. First, the argument runs backward, that "if he died for all, then were all dead;" it shows us to be in a state of guilt and danger, miserable, and like to continue so; and then it leads on our thoughts forwards, to the end he had in dying, "that they who live," who are fetched into life by him, should use it, "not to themselves, but

to him who died for them and rose again." Thus we are "nourished up in the words of faith and good doctrine," 1 Tim. iv. 6. "Do not my words do good, saith the Lord, to him that walks uprightly?" Mic. ii. 7. And is not his word as a hammer and a fire that breaks the rock in pieces? This report has melted and moulded the hearts of men. As it is "a faithful saying," so the Holy Ghost makes it "worthy of all acceptation," 1 Tim. i. 15.

Some notions that are ingrafted upon the Christian religion, have none of this vital virtue. "Their stock is a doctrine of vanities." The opinions that are raised up "by men of corrupt minds," do no manner of good; they want the influence that we feel in all the mysteries of godliness. I will give you but one instance, and that is from the notion of TRANSUBSTANTIATION. If you examine it impartially, you will find it as useless as it is absurd. If it were true, it would do no good. My soul is concerned to know that "God was manifest in the flesh," but not that he is manifest in the bread. His taking upon him my nature was needful, that "through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil," Heb. ii. 14. And thus he delivers those "who through fear of death, are all their lifetime subject to bondage." But it adds nothing to this victory that I should eat his body, every time that I remember his death. My believing that his flesh and blood are both in heaven and earth, may prove that my head has got a monstrous turn, but not that it has got a holy one. I have as many arguments for my duty and hope, if the bread is not changed, as I can have if it is. So that here is a mystery and a miracle thrown away upon me. My senses cannot receive it, and my faith does not need it. The doctrine of redemption, which is the ground of my assurance, is complete without it. If Christ, instead of saying, "This is my body," had said, this is a representation or memorial of my body, he had left me no way deficient either in my holiness or my comfort. I may believe (as we see by the lives of those that pretend to it) that the bread is changed

into the body of Christ, and yet be never the better for it. It is no security against my eating the bread unworthily, and becoming guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. To believe that he really gave himself for me, is a faith that carries all proper virtue along with it; the life that we live, is by this "faith of the Son of God," who loved us and gave himself for us, Gal. ii. 20. But to believe that a priest now gives him to us, signifies nothing at all; it is to believe an impertinence. That sort of receiving him, if it was really his body, does not make us saints, unless every one that has taken the sacrament, is undoubtedly saved. My concern is about a spiritual feeding—that I am partaker of him by faith, and find that, to my soul, he is meat indeed, and drink indeed. If I have this, I do not want his body; and if I have it not, the change of the bread into the body, makes it only a carnal ordinance; and with reference to this it may be said, that "the flesh profits nothing."

Thus you see the doctrine of Christ in the first of these divine characters; it is the *pillar and ground of truth.* It is also in the second, a *mystery;* and in the third, the principle, the argument, and direction of all *godliness*, as we may hereafter show. But this part of my subject should not be dismissed without an application.

1. If this is the pillar and ground of truth, it is a pity that it should be corrupted; that we cannot have the great articles of our religion delivered in the simplicity of the Gospel. The mystery of godliness as the Holy Ghost reveals it, looks very great and awful; but it only tends to darken counsel by words without knowledge, when men have dressed up the heads of doctrine in barbarous terms. The trumpet ought not to give an uncertain sound. That Christ is in the Father, and the Father in him, though it conveys to my soul a knowledge that is high, and I cannot attain unto it, yet the words are easy to be understood. There is a great plainness of speech, though a depth of wisdom. But to say he is "Light of light, God of God, very God of very God," is a twirl of words that

does not appear so full of majesty. We say of the doctrine and language of Scripture, as Solomon does in another case, that it is "soundness in the flesh;" but phrases fetched from the mother of harlots, will be "rottenness in the bones."

2. If this is the pillar and ground of truth, what expectations can we have from those who oppose it? "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ," 1 Cor. iii. 11. What sorts of people God may use in the cause of liberty we cannot tell. He is a sovereign agent in the whole course of providence; but it is not likely they should be the pillars of a nation, who are doing their utmost to destroy those of Christianity. When our Lord takes to himself his great power and reigns, he will suit his tools to his work. "The salvation of Israel" shall no longer be fetched from afar, but come at once, "out of Zion." "He raises up the poor out of the dust, and lifts up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory; for the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and he has set the world upon them," 1 Sam. ii. 8.

What a connection this has with the glory of a Redeemer, you will see from the 47th Psalm, which is written on purpose to celebrate his ascension; "The Lord is gone up with the sound of a trumpet." As one of the beauties of that day, when this shall be better known, he closes thus; "The princes of the people are gathered together, even the people of the God of Abraham; for the shields of the earth belong unto God, and he is greatly exalted." It was by faith in this, and it must be so again, that "they subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, quenched the violence of fire, out of weakness were made strong, turned to flight the armies of the aliens," Heb. xi. 34.

What we call bravery, without these impressions, is but like the rushing of the horse into the battle; and if such a one falls, he dies as a fool dies; he goes to an unknown God. But the Christian knows in whom he has believed. He overcomes, even in a

defeat, by the blood of the Lamb and the word of his testimony, and he loves not his life unto the death. There is but little hope in a time of danger from those who "bend their tongues like their bow for lies, but are not valiant for the truth upon earth; they proceed from evil to evil, and know not God." Our confidence is quite dissolved when these call themselves the friends of liberty; instead of trusting them, we must "take heed every one of his neighbour, and not trust in any brother; for every brother will utterly supplant, and every neighbour will walk with slanders; they will deceive every one his neighbour, and will not speak the truth; they have taught their tongue to speak lies, and weary themselves to commit iniquity," Jer. ix. 3—5.

CHAPTER II.

WITHOUT CONTROVERSY, GREAT IS THE MYSTERY OF GODLINESS.

We are now to consider the second character that the apostle gives us of the Christian religion; that though it is true, and a proper object of our belief, yet it is nevertheless *mysterious*. Thus we find it suited to three employments of the human soul. It is the matter of our *faith*, what we receive and depend upon; of our *wonder*, what we are filled and amazed with; and of our *practice*, working itself out into life and duty. The first of these belongs to that which is the pillar and ground of truth; the second, to that which God himself has called a mystery; and the third, to a doctrine that is according to godliness. It is made on purpose to form our behaviour, and give us a holy turn of heart and life towards all the revealed will of God.

I have already considered this noble chain of doctrines as they are true; I am now to take a view

of them under another title, as they are mysterious. This character, as well as the former, belongs to all the particulars of our religion; to the manifestation that God made of himself in the flesh; to his being justified in the spirit; the regard that was paid him by the angels; the diffusion of his name through the world by preaching; his inward empire in the hearts of the Gentiles who believe in him; and the fulness of his reward, as he was received into glory. These are all mysteries. Though we believe the report that is given us concerning them, yet they cannot fail to raise our hearts, and leave us in a secret confusion. There is something in every one of them that exceeds the reason of man, and yet allures it. We are lost in delightful mazes, that are neither to be denied nor comprehended. The mercy of our God is in the heavens, and his faithfulness reaches to the clouds; his righteousness is like great mountains, and his judgments are a great deep.

There are three words in this part of the verse. First, that this is a mystery; secondly, that it is a great one; and, thirdly, that it is so without controversy. I shall take them in their order, and so, at present, engage my thoughts and yours upon that august and mighty name that is given to the whole doctrine of the Gospel, which I will convey to you in this proposition, that

"The report we have of Christ Jesus in the New Testament, is all a mystery."

What this report is, and how mysterious it appears to be, I may show you through the several branches into which the distribution is made. At present I shall only consider the character in a general way, under the following heads:

1. Give some account what a mystery is.

2. Show you that the mysterious part of any doctrine does not hinder it from being true.

3. Inquire into the reasons why God has revealed mysteries in the Christian religion.

I. We must look into the meaning of the expression: what it is the apostle would have us conceive

of our religion when he calls it a mystery. I am altogether of their opinion who think, that in this word, he alludes to that which was either the glory, or the vanity of other religions.

First, it is well enough known that the priests among the heathen held the people in suspense, and led them into a foolish veneration, by pretending to have certain secrets in their own keeping, which the vulgar were not to know. By that craft they had their wealth. It was the trade of the tribe. They talked as if the gods had given them a patent for hoarding up the great bulk of mystery, and retailing it out at their own pleasure. Thus they became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Every man was brutish by his knowledge, his molten image was falsehood. They rendered themselves the rulers of the darkness of this world. Now for these devotions the city of Ephesus had been the most famous: they were worshippers of the great goddess Diana, and the image which fell from Jupiter.

Therefore the apostle furnishes Timothy with an answer to all the enthusiasm of the people among whom he lived. They valued their religion for mysteries, for unintelligible glories; and so may we do ours; but not in the crafty and mercenary way that they did. Our mysteries are not kept as the property of the priests, but scattered and given out in an open manner, that every one may read them. He tells the Ephesians, that when they read they might understand his "knowledge in the mystery of Christ." Eph. iii. 4.

Secondly, The Jews had mysteries in their religion. David desires that God would teach him the wonders of his law. Their duty was commonly woven into their hope. Their obedience was partly moral and partly ceremonial. Theirs was the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, and the promises. God dealt not with any other nation as he did with them. Their service, the fire in their tem-

ple, the cloud that sometimes filled it, the strange protection which they saw about it, was all a mystery. Their figures of the mercy-seat above the ark, and the cherubim above that, shading it with their wings, poring upon it with inquisitive looks; these were among the "wonderful works" that he made "to be remembered," Psal. cxi. 4.

Now the Apostle, who always endeavoured to vindicate the reputation of the gospel, would scarcely neglect it here. Timothy's father was a Greek, and his own education had been among them, as appears from his not being circumcised till he was grown up; but his mother and grandmother were both Jews, and read the Scriptures. He therefore lets him know, that what they so justly admired in the Jewish religion, was outdone in the Christian; though the *figures* of a Saviour with which they used to converse were mysterious, yet the *life* itself, in the flesh, in the spirit, and in his glory, was a great deal more so. Therefore, you may take the design of the apostle in these two positions. It was to show the preference of our revelation, to the conceit of the Gentiles, and, to the peculiarity of the Jews. It had all that, which the one pretended to in vain, and which the other possessed in a lower degree. For "without controversy great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh," &c.

There have been debates about the meaning of the word *mystery*. Some would have us believe, that it signifies no more than what is easily comprehended; and that any truth, though it lies the most open to your understanding, may go by that name. But this is throwing all language out of the world, and leaving us uncertain about the sounds that we hear. If a mystery is not something out of the common way, I do not know what occasion we have for the word itself; and yet it is frequently used in the New Testament, which would never have been done, if the apostle had not designed to give us some greater apprehensions of what he calls by that title. "We

speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world to our glory," 1 Cor. ii. 7. These are called afterwards "the deep things of God."

I shall not trouble you with derivations of the word, which all sides are agreed in; but I take it to include these four things, as it is applied to the doctrines of religion; it is secret, important, it could never have been known but by revelation, and there is something in it above the comprehension of our reason.

1. A mystery is something kept secret, locked up from the view of men. This sense of it agrees to the doctrines of Christianity upon a threefold account.

1. As they were concealed from former ages.

2. As they are yet so from the greatest part of the world.

3. As they continue so in some degree to God's own people.

(1.) They were kept secret from former ages. Thus we are expressly told, that this wisdom of God in a mystery was "not made known to the sons of men," Eph. iii. 5. The doctrine was hid from ages and generations, "kept secret since the world began," which is now manifest and revealed by the writings of the prophets, and "made known to all nations for the obedience of faith," Rom. xvi. 25, 26. The people of God in the old times had general hopes, loose and transient views. Abraham saw the day of Christ and was glad; John viii. 56; David being a prophet knew that God would, of the fruit of his loins, raise up Christ to sit upon his throne, Acts ii. 30. Isaiah saw his glory, and spake of him, John xii. 41. This was, in all generations, the hope of Israel. And yet it was but little they saw or knew, in comparison of later visions. We have life and immortality brought out into a better light. They pressed in vain to our discoveries. Many kings and righteous men desired to see the things that we see, and did not see them; and to hear the things that we hear, and did not hear them. They all died in faith, but they had not re-

ceived the promises, God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect, Heb. xi. 40. They were conscious of the imperfection of their knowledge, as you may collect from what the woman of Samaria told our Lord. "We know that the Messiah comes, and when he is come, he will teach us all things." When John the Baptist had his prophetical ordination, he was to go before the face of the Highest, to give the people the knowledge of salvation in the remission of their sins, whereby the day-spring from on high would visit them. Christ himself was a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel. John was the greatest of those who were born of women, and yet he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.

There was something in their very privileges that let them know the right convictions were not yet come. Their custom of attending the sanctuary was in such a manner, that the Holy Ghost signified thereby, "that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest." Heb. ix. 8. It was but a figure for the time present; and the service which stood in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, was imposed on them only till the time of reformation. Thus we find it was in fact; for when the Son of Man came, he found no faith in the earth; they were lost in the prophecies that related to him; for though the prophets were read every Sabbath day, they understood them not, but fulfilled them by condemning him. Acts xiii. 27. Therefore, we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, which none of the princes of this world knew, 1 Cor. ii. 7, 8; men of the highest figure in the Jewish church; for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. They were shut up, under the law, "to the faith that should afterwards be revealed." Gal. iii. 23.

The apostle compares the two dispensations to the two different ages of childhood and maturity. A child is really possessed of the human nature; he has

an immortal soul, rational faculties, and is a being of the same sort with a person grown up. But how loose are his reasonings! though the substance of his opinion may be right, yet the manner of conducting it, is very imperfect. Thus says the apostle, When I was a child, I thought as a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child. This he says of his state in the Jewish religion, in which he had profited above many of his equals in his own nation. There was a notorious infancy in their whole profession. But, says he, when I became a man, I put away childish things. He judged of the same subjects in another way.

Thus was the doctrine of our religion a mystery. The first name that Christ is called by is "Wonderful." Isa. ix. 6. The great wonders that are now discovered, at that time were kept hid, covered and veiled. So that the children of Israel could not look to the end of those things that were to be abolished; 2 Cor. iii. 13; and this veil is done away in Christ. "The heir, as long as he is a child, differs nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; but is under tutors and governors till the time appointed of the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world; but when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son." Gal. iv. 1—4.

(2.) These things are still kept secret from the greatest part of mankind. I do not only mean the heathen who know not God, but the inhabitants of those countries where the Gospel has come. Our Saviour tells one of his disciples, To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom, but to them in parables, that hearing they may hear, and not understand, and seeing they may see, and not perceive. This distinction that the goodness of God has made between some and others, is what He affirms with hearty praises. "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes; even so Father, for so it seemed

good in thy sight," Matt. xi. 25, 26. Thus the apostle pursues the observation. We are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish; to the one we are the savour of death unto death, to the other of life unto life," 2 Cor. ii. 15, 16. The ground of this difference is not only in their will, but their apprehensions. We preach Christ Jesus, and him crucified, to them that perish foolishness, but to those that are saved, both Jews and Greeks, the wisdom of God, and the power of God, 1 Cor. i. 23. He assures us that "the natural man," by whom he does not understand a person vile in his morals, but one left to the conduct of his natural reason, "receives not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned," 1 Cor. ii. 14.

The people who deny that Christianity is a mystery, plainly prove it; because it is locked up from them. Our Gospel is hid to those that are lost; the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ does not shine into their hearts, but the god of this world has blinded the eyes of those that believe not. We see with how much equity, our religion may go by this name. The learning of men laughs at it, their corruptions war against it. To the unbelieving there is nothing pure, but their mind and conscience are defiled; both the faculty that should receive the evidence of truth, and that which should make impressions of duty. To them that believe, Christ is precious; but to them that be disobedient, he is a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence: they stumble at the word, whereunto they were appointed, 1 Pet. ii. 7, 8.

(3.). They are a secret, even to God's own people; they know but in part, and so prophesy in part. God has indeed opened the eyes of their understanding in the revelation of himself; but how little a portion do they hear of him! We have the means of grace, pastors and teachers for edifying of the body of Christ; but we are not yet come to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to the

fulness of the stature of Christ, to the measure of a perfect man. The substantials of the truth are as much as we can expect, that we be not like children, tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine. The more we know, the more we need; not as though we had already attained, or were already perfect; but we follow after, if we may apprehend that for which we are also apprehended of Christ Jesus: nay we count not ourselves to have apprehended.

The discoveries reserved to another world, are laid down in those terms that show their transcendency to every thing here below. We are to see Christ as he is; as if all the representations we have of him now, were some way wrong or untrue. We shall see him "face to face," 1 Cor. xiii. 12, and know as we are known; as if all we had now was but hearsay; and indeed it is no more: "for we walk by faith," (which comes by hearing) "and not by sight." When we have gone as far as time and study can carry us, we still see there are vast important themes yet untouched. The "temple of God" is not to be opened till we get to heaven, and there we shall see "the ark of his testament, Rev. xi. 19. Upon these accounts it may be said, our Gospel is hid; it was so to the Jews, it is so to those that are lost; and, in part, it is so to the believer himself; and therefore it may be called a mystery.

1. It is called a mystery from its importance. Several things are kept secret which it would do us no good to know. It is not worth the while to take off their vail. Many of the heathen discoveries were impertinent and empty, and so are all human inventions that have crowded into Christianity. Abundance of that sort of learning that men admire is hard to attain, and worth nothing when we have it. But what God calls a mystery is compared to "a garden inclosed, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed;" things that are made both for necessity and delight. It is a wisdom ordained before the world to our glory. 1 Cor. ii. 7.

Mahomet pretended to have revelations from his

pigeon, and do wonders upon his ass; but what do they all amount to? The miracles in the popish histories are ridiculous. We must not engage the power of God in trifles and children's play. But the name of a mystery as it stands in the New Testament, calls up our veneration for the thing it belongs to. These doctrines are hid with Christ in God; they are numbered among the endearments of eternity; they were the delight and sweet counsel that the Father and the Son took together. What is it that the apostle gives the name to in our text, but the course of a Redeemer from glory to glory again! The value of his person, the extremity of his suffering, the merit of his atonement, the extent of his empire, the effect of his Gospel, and the fulness of his reward. These are not only great in themselves, being the history of a God, an account of his journey from a throne to a cross, and from thence to a crown; but they are our own concern. This is what we flee to, as the hope that is set before us. It is not a trifling or a foreign mystery; but by these mazes of divine love we are trained up, and brought on to the inheritance reserved in heaven for us. It is the love and kindness of God our Saviour that appears towards men, Tit. iii. 4.

2. It is called a mystery, because it never could have been known, but by Revelation. Had not God himself made the great disclosure, we must have remained for ever ignorant of it. The Apostle tells us, it is shut out from all the avenues of knowledge. "Eye hath not seen it," 1 Cor. ii. 9. Nature shows nothing of redemption; the depth saith, it is not in me, and the sea saith, it is not with me. "Ear has not heard" it; angels would never have told the secret; the whole world was silent upon that head. Neither could it enter into the heart of man; we could not have formed any conception or scheme of it within ourselves; we were not able to give it that poor sort of life that we do to a project in our own imaginations, if God had not revealed it to us by his Spirit. He made known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, Rom. ix. 23. This is a myste-

ry; a truth that we could never have thought of, and must receive from no other than God himself.

This account you may carry along with you through all the particulars of our religion. Who could ever have started the design that God should be *manifest* in the flesh? that he should come down, and not only live among us, but die for us? that he should rise again to the esteem of another world, and afterwards plant an empire in this? These things might have lain in the folds of the decree, in the same infinite Mind that formed them, if God himself had not made them known in the Holy Scriptures.

3. A mystery is something above the comprehension of our reason. The things of God knows no man, but the Spirit of God. 1 Cor. ii. 11. Reason is employed about the evidence, whether God has said it or not; but it quietly resigns the rest to *faith*. We receive the doctrines unexplained. There is a part in them that we do not understand; but if they are revealed they will be admired; and though some tell us that to confess a mystery in our religion, is to give up the glory of it, yet I am no more ashamed of the wonders of the gospel, than I am of the scandal that attends it, desiring to "preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ."

II. The *mystery* of a doctrine does not hinder it from being true. It is no objection against Christianity that there are things in it beyond the grasp of reason. "We see through a glass darkly." This does not make it a heap of enthusiasm, a piece of priestcraft in those that deliver it, or a blind implicit faith in them that receive it, as will be seen by the following particulars: 1. The difficulty or easiness of a doctrine, does not make it the matter of our faith, but we go entirely upon the sufficiency of the evidence. 2. This obtains in every part of life, and it is strange we should exclude it from religion. 3. It is no way unaccountable that the nature and the designs of God should be incomprehensible to us. 4. It is necessary that our understanding should

honour the revelation of God by a subjection, as well as our wills by a compliance. 5. These are not mysteries of man's forging, but we have them in the book of God. 6. They are not concealed by any party or tribe among us, but lie open to be seen and read of all men. Therefore, 7. The design of preaching them, is not to set up the tyranny of priests, but to lead people to a veneration for their God, a dependence upon him, and an application to him.

1. It is no argument against Christianity that it is a mystery; because our believing of any thing is not at all concerned in the difficulty or easiness of a proposition, but in the sufficiency of the evidence upon which it comes. Timothy was to continue in the things he had learned and been assured of, knowing of whom he had learned them. 2 Tim. iii. 14.

We must distinguish between knowledge and faith. Knowledge is the opinion that we have, either from the observations of our senses, or the conclusions of reason. But faith is the apprehension that is raised in us by the testimony of another; and therefore, in that case, we have no further concern than in the wisdom and veracity of him that reports it. As, for example, suppose any traveller should tell us the strange and barbarous customs they have among the Indians; the employment of the mind upon that occasion is not, whether these practices are right, or whether we could have imagined them, but whether this man really knows what he tells, and tells what he knows. If we are satisfied that he is not deceived by others, nor we by him, we take the story though it is never so unaccountable. We do not examine the folly or stupidity of the action, but the validity of the witness, and so may be said most heartily to believe, what we as thoroughly condemn. Now, in the case before us, we have the report upon the highest evidence. Whatever God tells us must be true, whether we comprehend it or not, for these two reasons: 1. because he "is light, and in him is no darkness at all;" he cannot be mocked; and 2. he is

"a God of truth, and without iniquity;" he cannot deceive.

Where is the difference between believing a mystery and receiving a prophecy? Our reason can reach to neither of them; they are equally beyond the comprehension of that faculty. When God told Abraham he should be "the father of many nations," he had as much ground to doubt of that, as we have of any doctrine in the Christian religion. But he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; he believed in hope, and against hope, accounting that he was able to do what he had promised, Rom. iv. 18, 19. Not that he knew the way how. He saw there were several objections against it, but these he drowns in a veneration for omnipotence. He considered not his own body, now dead, which would have rendered such an expectation impossible; but when God was to do it, he knew it would come to pass; for he who could raise the dead, had a right to call "the things that are not as though they were." Should we not all of us have condemned Abraham, had he not thus received the promise? Should we not have said of him as the angel did of Sarah, "Wherefore did she laugh? is any thing too hard for the Lord?" Unbelief in such a word as this, must have the soul of atheism in it, and proceed from our thinking God to be such a one as ourselves. An unbeliever gives no other reason why God cannot do it, than this, that *we* cannot. Well, he expects from us the same veneration for his knowledge that Abraham gave to his power. "O the depth of the riches of the wisdom of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out." Men will not receive a mystery because they do not understand it. And how comes this to be a reason against it, unless we judge that God knows no more than we do; that because a thing is inconceivable to us, it must be so to him?

If he has really told us, "there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one;" if he has said that

"God was manifest in the flesh," we have as much reason to believe that, as Ezekiel had that the people should return to their own land. The difficulty of the case does not throw it out of our faith, because it is a God that speaks it; no more than it threw the promise out of their hope, because it was a God that should perform it. And if we put the question upon this doctrine, it is but the same that God himself did upon the design, "Son of man, can these dry bones live?" If nature, if reason was to answer, it would say No; but he returns God's question, as we must do our own, "O Lord, thou knowest." Is it possible that three persons should be in one nature, and two natures in one person? we may say, the Lord knows. But if he has revealed it, faith has evidence enough. Do not say, this makes religion no more than a reverend blindness, that it is a sealing up of the understanding; for,

2. This sort of faith obtains in every part of life, and it is strange that we should deny it in religion. If we have received the witness of men, the witness of God is greater which he hath given of his Son. Thus it is in all practice. We resign ourselves at sea to the conduct of others, though to us it is all a mystery that people should know their road, and distance from places, by the stars. But would it not be very weak for us to say, there is no such thing as a knowledge of navigation, merely because we ourselves have it not? If a person, whose skill and veracity I have no doubt of, should tell me he has seen or made an engine, which by the moving of a finger should lift up a ton, the thing itself is what I can neither contrive nor imagine, and yet upon my opinion of the man I should easily believe it.

This principle runs through the world; there could be no living, if people were not as well satisfied of what others tells them, as of what they see themselves. And, must God alone be out of credit with us! Shall a report be to us "the evidence of things not seen" in ten thousand cases, and must it have no place in religion? May it not be said in this case,

"O house of Israel are not your ways unequal?" Remember our gospel is revealed by Him who can neither deceive, nor be deceived. "His eyes are as a flame of fire," and deceit is an abomination to his lips. It is upon the evidence of Infinite Wisdom, and eternal truth, that we believe.

3. If any thing is incomprehensible to us, it must be the nature of an infinite God, and the awful designs of his will. Now this is the mystery of the gospel; it gives us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, ἐν προσωπῷ, in the person of Jesus Christ, 2 Cor. iv. 6. His mercy to sinners is in the heavens; his faithfulness to the saints, above the clouds; his righteousness is like the great mountains. Why should it be a thing incredible or shocking to human reason, that there is a depth in this doctrine that it cannot reach? Do not the common notions we have of Him who made the world tell us, that we cannot "by searching find out God, we cannot find out the Almighty to perfection? It is higher than heaven, what can we know? deeper than hell, what can we do? the measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea." These apprehensions diffuse themselves through all our sentiments of a God. "Touching the Almighty, we cannot find him out."

If his decrees are to be explained, or his nature comprehended, he is become too little for our reverence and godly fear. Our esteem for him is upon the ground of those perfections, that he is "the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God." We are forced to make use of these negatives for want of thoughts and words commensurate to the subject. There is something in the attributes of never-beginning and never-ending that leads us out of our depth. We are lost in our conceptions of a Being who is "from everlasting to everlasting;" and yet, is it not the highest reason that we should in this manner judge of Him who "is before all things, and by whom all things consist?" In the mystery of Godliness, we consider his justice, his purity, his goodness, and his power, as combining all their glories, and making

them appear together, and if there is any truth in the matter, it must be incomprehensible. "Such knowledge is too wonderful for us, we cannot attain unto it."

We look upon this whole contrivance as a thing that was laid long before the execution. The Scripture gives us the date of it, from before the foundation of the world. And are those counsels to be settled and unfolded by creatures of yesterday? Do we suppose that God lived without any designs? and, if he had them, must it not be in a way transcendent to all the inquiries of men? Can any thing be more agreeable and certain than that "secret things belong to God, and things revealed unto us?" Does he not speak like himself, when he saith, "My thoughts are not as your thoughts, nor my ways, as your ways?" And is not the comparison within all the bounds of modesty, that as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are his ways and thoughts above ours?

If there is a God, and he has formed any purpose within himself, it must be of a bulk and depth that we are not able to take within our compass. The secrets of wisdom are double to that which is; and, therefore, he shows himself a vain man who will be wise in these matters. When people say they will not be of a religion that they cannot understand, there is one sense of the word that is honest and good; but there is another that carries with it all the pride of impiety. If they mean no more by it, than that they would understand *why* they are of such a religion, it is right and fair; we ought to "give a reason of the hope that is in us," and therefore we should have one. But if they will admit no more into their religion than what reason could have found without a revelation, and what it can explain and divest of all its mystery, it is a vile absurdity. "Professing themselves to be wise, they become fools."

Do you say, that you will adore no God but one whose nature comes down to the apprehension of yours? that you will believe nothing that he tells you, but what you might have known if he had

never told it? What a narrow Deity are you taking up with! What! is this the God that made the heavens, that formed the dry land, that filled and bounded the sea, of whom you speak? No, surely. Go among the heathen, make gods as they do, and then you may understand all that is in them. But will you talk in this manner of Him who has "measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, meted out the heaven with a span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance? Who has directed the Spirit of this Lord, or being his counsellor has taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him in the path of judgment, and showed him the way of understanding? To whom will ye liken God, or what likeness will ye compare unto him?" He repeats this last question himself, "To whom then will you liken me, or shall I be equal, saith the Holy One?" May not these questions throw as much confusion upon your minds, as they did upon Job, when God spoke them out of the whirlwind? "Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare if thou hast understanding. Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened, or who laid the corner-stone thereof? Hast thou commanded the morning since thy days, or caused the day-spring to know its place? Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea, or hast thou walked in the search of the depth? Hast thou perceived the breadth of the earth? declare, if thou knowest it all. Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven? canst thou set the dominion thereof in the earth?"

Can you establish notions for the rest of mankind about the course of the stars, the motion of the earth, and the periodical flow of the waters? No; it is plain we know little of the matter. Very learned men in former ages have left behind them those systems that we despise, and we cannot defend our own against the same usage from posterity. This change of opinions is an argument that the thing itself is unknown.

Well, shall the works of nature be closed, and those of grace be open? Are there mysteries every where in the world, and must there be none in religion? Is the wisdom of God to be more admired in the ways he takes for our temporal subsistence, than it is in providing for us a life and immortality? As thou knowest not what is the way of the Spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child; even so thou knowest not the works of God, who maketh all. Marvellous are his works, as the souls of his people know right well. There are riches of glory in this mystery.

The argument lies in this, that if God has laid a design of redemption for his people, if he did send his Son into our nature, if he made him a propitiation for us, if we are accepted in him, and sanctified by him, these are things that we must believe; but upon no other foundation than because he has said them. However, they will always continue to be the "deep things of God," "the unsearchable riches of Christ." They are true upon the light of revelation that brings them, but they will be mysterious from the matter of which they consist; and it is impossible, considering how little we know of other things, that we should ever comprehend all the wonders of these. God dwells in light unapproachable, whom no man has seen, nor can see.

4. Consider how needful it is that our understandings do their duty to God's wisdom by believing a revelation, as well as our wills be obedient to his authority by complying with a precept. We have not attained, but follow after, if we may apprehend; and we count not ourselves to have apprehended.

He is to be glorified in every faculty; he will have the tribute of our whole nature. Every faculty was polluted in the fall, every one of them is renewed by his grace; and therefore they are all to have their proper share in a life of duty. There is as much reason for the *faith* of a good man, as there is for his self-denial. What argument is there against a mystery that will not hold as well against a command?

I do not now mean the duties of justice and mercy, which should run through all our behaviour to men, or the fear and reverence that should fill our worship to God; but there are other parts of obedience that every Christian knows to be needful; a continuance in the ways of God at the expense of all that is dear to flesh and blood; what our Lord calls a taking up the cross and following him, without which we cannot be his disciples. Sometimes the positions of interest and conscience are so opposed to one another, that no man can serve both God and mammon. We are called to forsake father and mother, and children, and houses, and lands, for the sake of the Gospel. We have it in our choice to live with fame and fulness, to roll in the preferments of the world; but then this is plainly giving up the honour that comes from God only, and putting far from us everlasting life. In a word, things are sometimes brought to that pass, that he that saves life shall lose it, and he must lose it who will save it to life eternal.

Now the martyrs are enrolled in the records of God, as those that "overcame by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony, and they loved not their lives unto the death," Rev. xii. 11. Could not they say as much against this, as we do against mysteries? They were not guided in that submission by sense, or by reason. There was something in their choice very unaccountable to a carnal mind. There could be no greater absurdity to human reason than what the apostle says, "Though I suffer these things I am not ashamed." Every martyr might have had arguments enough against his afflictions, such as the ruin of a family and loss of reputation, health, or life. But he "endured, as seeing him who is invisible," Heb. xi. 27; which sounds like a contradiction. They had respect to the recompense of reward, which was all out of sight. Christ whom they loved, they had not seen, and yet "though they saw him not, believing in him, they rejoiced with a joy unspeakable and full of glory," 1 Peter i. 8. His will concerning them was declared in a strange arti-

cle; but upon the whole, was it not right for them thus to die? Has not this faith given the elders a good report?

Well, these were a sort of practical mysteries, and stand upon the same foundation with those that are doctrinal, that is, the revelation of our God. Now, why must we sacrifice every certain interest in this world, our fame, our ease, our estates and lives, to his authority, and yet resolve that we will make no surrenders to his wisdom? We do these things because he is our Master, and is there nothing owing to him as our Teacher? It is he that has put wisdom in the inward parts, and has given understanding to the heart. Is the will to be all at his service, and the understanding excused from duty? We are said to "comprehend a love that passes knowledge, and to be filled with all the fulness of God;" but the phrases must be expounded with modesty, because the God who gives us those blessings is "able to do exceeding abundantly above what we can ask or think, and he actually does so by "the power that works in us," Eph. iii. 18—20.

You may run the parallel between Abraham's believing that he should be the father of many nations, and your believing a doctrine of the gospel. A promise and a mystery are equally above the comprehension of our reason. I will now make the same comparison between his obedience and our faith. When he was ordered to leave his father's house, and go into a country that God would tell him of, by faith "he obeyed, and went out not knowing whither he went." Nothing but faith could make him do it; that was the venturous principle, that trusted God, relied upon his word, and was satisfied in his providence. It was certainly right in Abraham to do what he did. Now, suppose God had told him any thing that was purely a doctrine, should not that have had the same admission into his thoughts, that the other had into his practice? This is the language of a believer, "Lord I am universally thine; my whole soul is for thee, and let every faculty have a share of the

service. As my will regards thy command, my understanding does the same by thy gospel; whatever thou hast said I must receive, either into my faith or into my practice." By revelation he makes known to us the mystery, Eph. iii. 3.

5. Consider, these are not mysteries of man's forging. Do not suppose that in this argument we are stealing away your reason, or your liberties, and giving them up to the control of others. We renounce those hidden things of dishonesty, and hate to walk in that craftiness. This infamous practice has made the name of a mystery to be abhorred.

That monstrous iniquity of the Papists, the doctrine of transubstantiation, is such a bondage upon human nature both in soul and body, that I shall ever encourage the jealousy of the world against human impositions, and I long for those better times when that jealousy shall burn like fire; and when priests will teach only by the rule; or if they do not, the people will not believe them. It is loading both sense and reason with a burden too heavy for them to bear, when any tell us, that here is a change without an alteration, or a creation without a God; that what we taste, and see, and smell, and feel to be bread, is really flesh and blood; that it is both in earth and heaven; that it is eaten as a morsel, and adored as a deity; that we swallow what we worship; that it continues the same, and yet is changed. These are contradictions. It is a wrong way of addressing human nature. It makes our reason and senses pass for nothing; and it is worse still to call this *a God*, and to suppose that a certain formal sinner in a fantastical garb, by the muttering of four words, has it in his power to work all these wonders. They call it a mystery indeed, and so they may; but it is what the Scripture has never given that name to, unless it be in disgrace, when it speaks of a "mystery of iniquity," that in the last times was to be celebrated with "lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish," 2 Thess. ii. 9, 10. Now, this is plainly "art and man's device." The text

they bring for it out of the Bible, would never convince any one, if they did not fortify their interpretations with fire and faggot; and take that way of driving heretics out of the world, that they may drive hypocrites into the church.

But the doctrines of the gospel are of another kind. If you do not find them in the Bible, you need not be concerned about them. That which we preach is the record that God has given of his Son. We have not followed cunningly devised fables; but have a sure word of prophecy to which we do well to take heed. As we are allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, so we speak.

6. These mysteries are not confined to any party or tribe, but lie open to the perusal of all. "All men are to see what is the fellowship of the mystery." Eph. iii. 9. If ministers are supposed to understand them better, it is not from any external character, and much less from any ceremony that is acted upon them, or any garb and distinction in those that do it. No illumination goes along with human fingers. God who puts no trust in "the *legs* of a man," has as much contempt of his *hands*. If ministers have a greater knowledge of the doctrine, it is because God has blessed their studies. They give attendance to reading and exhortation; they are supposed to search the Scriptures daily; and, above all, to depend on the light that comes from above; for all their "sufficiency is of God, who makes them able ministers of the New Testament." 2 Cor. iii. 5, 6.

The revelation is as open to you as it is to them. You are to judge of the doctrines they bring. If they talk of any mysteries that are not to be found in the Bible, deal with them as you would with old men's dreams, and old wives' fables. Christianity is no secret lodged with a particular order. All the saints shall know the Lord, from the least to the greatest. Therefore take nothing upon trust, but remember the place of your last appeal, "to the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Isa. viii. 20.

"Try the Spirits whether they be of God." If they preach any other gospel than what is revealed, instead of receiving their blessing, you may give in your curse. Search the Scriptures daily, whether the things be so, or not. So that

7. The preaching of these mysteries is not setting up the tyranny of a priest. I hope I shall ever abhor all that as the vilest abuse of Christianity, and one of the most pernicious crimes in our nature. I know not any thing that has done more harm in the world, than for men to teach and command what they have no ground for in Scripture. They are "the light of the world, but if the light that is in them be darkness, how great is that darkness?"

Here the case is quite otherwise. You are not called to believe these things because we demand it, nor is your faith to be either paid with places, or dragged on with penalties. You do not believe at a market price; there is no employment either of craft or force to set home the mystery of godliness. Christ uses you as he would have you used. Do not say, here is a subjection of your reason, or any hardship offered to it. There is the fairest proposal that man can receive, or God can give; for his grace that brings salvation, has appeared to all men. You are bid to examine these doctrines, to do it impartially; and is there any thing wrong in this? Do not say, we are imposing upon you. Your conscience knows that is false. Our gospel is "not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile."

If we bring plain Scripture for any doctrine, receive it; not for our sakes, but because it is the word of truth, the language of a "God that cannot lie;" and if we do not, continue your unbelief, harden yourselves in it, and resolve to be unmoved. But, can you say that we ply you with human authority? that what we urge for the divinity of Christ, the truth of his satisfaction, the imputation of his righteousness, the infusion of his grace, is any of that "vain conversation received by tradition from the fathers?" Do we pretend to prove this as they do the cross in

baptism, kneeling at the sacrament, or bowing to the east? Are they the decrees of councils, the inventions of synods? Are such pitiful rags of authority all that we have to say for them? No, we are manifest to God, and I trust are also manifest to your consciences, and therefore use us as "good stewards of the manifold grace of God." "It is required of a steward that a man be found faithful." Examine that, and trust us no further than we prove every opinion. Your faith is not owing to us; we come to beg it for our God.

Is it not strange that any should dispute, whether Christianity is *mysterious* or no? The apostle says it is, as plainly as any thing can be said, and that it is so "without controversy;" and shall we have a controversy whether it be so or no? This is a contradiction to the whole language of Scripture, an affront upon the experience of God's people in every age. It tends to the ruin of practical religion, and it increases to more and more ungodliness.

1. This contradicts the whole language of Scripture. If there are no mysteries in Christianity, why should the word be so often rung in our ears? Why does God use a phrase that has no meaning, and bestow a vain pomp upon his doctrines, rather to confound us than to make us wiser? Why have we any other than "words of truth and soberness?" When we read of "the deep things of God," of "the wisdom of God in a mystery, and the hidden wisdom that was ordained before the world unto our glory;" when we are told that these are "things that the natural man receives not, that they are only spiritually discerned; that they are hid from the wise and prudent;" that they are "the unsearchable riches of Christ;" are all these only great swelling words of vanity? or is there a sense going along with them in proportion to the majesty which they bear?

What can we suppose that the great God is talking of, when he takes expressions that are out of the way, and never used on any other occasion? He tells us of a mystery manifest to the saints; he calls it "the

riches of the glory of this mystery." He directs us to an acknowledgment of the mystery, and says, that in Christ are "hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Is this no more than a flourish of words over a doctrine that was plain, and might have been known without a revelation? How unworthy is such a reflection, of his purity! how unworthy of his goodness! He is not capable of that character in himself, and he has never deserved it from you. Look into your Bibles; call things by the names that are given them there. Stand to that language; it will do, when the froth and laughter of fools are dissolved and confounded. Remember who it is that has told you of "the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world has been hid in God," and that "by the church" is made known "the manifold wisdom of God." And if any one tells you otherwise, the decision of the case is very easy; "Let God be true, and every man a liar." "He is to be justified in his sayings, and to overcome when he is judged."

2. This opinion, that there are no mysteries in religion, is an affront upon all the experience of God's people in every age. I own as readily as you would have me, that no thoughts, no sensations of the good men that have gone before me ought to be the rule of my thinking and tasting. Faith and feeling are personal. But yet, some regard should be had to the generation of God's children; not to offend against them, or to entertain a notion that all of them have been in a mistake. We will suppose that *some* of them were weak, and not able to comprehend what you do, but are *all* of them so? "Art thou the first man that was born, or wast thou made before the hills? Dost thou restrain the secret of God to thyself? What knowest thou that others knew not?"

The Apostle, when he speaks but of one mystery that you find in this chain (viz. preaching the gospel to the Gentiles,) or rather of a circumstance belonging to it, the cutting off of the Jews, and their restoration again, is lost in the subject. "O the depth of

the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! Who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counsellor? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things," Rom. xi. 33—36. What need was there of this excursion, if the doctrine contained no wonder in it? Why should he use that vehemence of language, if there was no occasion for it? And as it was with him, so it has been with all those who have obtained the like precious faith. They have looked into the Book of God: they have thought the Revelation sufficient for their faith, but the matter of it above their reason. This they have confessed, and (which is the best way of owning it) it has made them earnest for heavenly directions; they have reached after more light with prayer and fervour; their inquiries have run out into adorations. This has been the practice of those who walked humbly with their God, and were upright before him in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. With these thoughts they lived, and with the comforts that flowed from them they died. The opinion always sunk them in their own eyes, made them useful to the world whilst they knew it, and easy to be gone when they were called to leave it.

Now, what have we in balance to *their* character, in those who would lead us aside from the doctrines which they taught and believed? This was the profession of our fathers, who through faith and patience now inherit the promises. Paul we know, Peter we know, what they said and apprehended we can tell, but who are these, that are for beating all down again? What is the language of this new opinion? Put it with the greatest modesty you can, and it must run to this purpose; "Alas! good men! they are mistaken. There is no mystery in what they admired, no truth in many things which they believed. Their devotion upon these heads might all have been spared; the God they served kept them in the dark both living and dying, but we see into the strong delusion, and are delivered from the *enthusiasm* of former ages." And

who are these men, whom God has taught at a better rate than ever he did his prophets, his martyrs, his humble faithful people, in the several ages of the world? What is there in them that shows a greater illumination? Or, why must we, in compliment to them, throw a slur upon the cloud of witnesses that have gone before us? I do not love to make invidious comparisons, and will therefore only say of the one sort and the other, "You know the men and their communications."

3. This tends to the ruin of practical religion. When people are corrupted from the simplicity of the gospel, when they lay aside the truth as it is in Jesus, it is foretold, and it may be observed, that this will increase to more and more ungodliness. And the reason is plain why it should do so; if once there is a refusal to admit any thing upon a divine testimony, it destroys a confidence in God. If we cannot trust his word for a doctrine, we cannot trust it for a promise It throws us into ourselves; we are alienated from the life of God, can neither live to him in duty, nor live with him in communion, through the darkness that is in us. This makes us cast off fear, and restrain prayer before him.

These are mysteries of Godliness. Godliness flows from them, and is maintained by them. We read of some who "speak great swelling words of vanity, and allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those who were clean escaped from them that live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption," 2 Pet. ii. 18, 19. Corruption brings error, and error brings that, "the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts shall heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;" and so "they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and be turned unto fables," 2 Tim. iv. 3, 4. You will find men drink and swear, and commit iniquity with greediness, and in that filth be zealous against the doctrines of the gospel; as if any character was good enough for those that oppose Christianity, though

we know what manner of persons they should be who maintain it. He who refuses a mystery because he cannot understand it, will be as ready to slight a precept because he does not like it. And, indeed, I fear it is from a hatred of practical godliness that many run into strange opinions. It is a sort of a bauble to the conscience; something for it to play with, and divert itself by.

4. This will increase to more error. And there are two reasons to be given for it; the natural tendency of that principle, and the judicial resentment of God. He gives them up to "walk after their own lusts." He leaves them to "strong delusions," to "vile affections," to a "reprobate mind;" "evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." Therefore, continue in the things that you have learned. If once a person has any objection against a divine testimony, he can stick at nothing. He is loose and open to every wind of doctrine. He is driven from his anchor; he has no hold; nothing to keep him firm and steady. From rejecting one point of Scripture, we naturally go on to strike at the whole foundation. And when we come that length, to think that God has given us no rule for our faith and practice, there is nothing so foolish and impious in the religion of the Heathen, but we may fall into it. These are some of the consequences of denying that *Christianity is mysterious.*

III. What is the benefit of having mysteries in the Christian religion? Why could not our lawgiver have done as others did, only laid before us a set of rules, and distributed them under the several heads of practice, without ever engaging our faith in any speculations at all.

I suppose you are no strangers to the objection that is formed upon this head, and in how triumphant a manner some persons have talked, as if they were sure of destroying the foundation that God has laid in Zion, and making *him* a second time to be "despised of the builders," whom infinite wisdom has appointed to be "the Head of the corner." Upon

this we have had a run against the religion of the gospel. They have turned its glory into shame, and taken occasion to laugh at it for the sake of those doctrines that distinguish it above all others. We have this account from the Apostle, that he was called to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ, to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery—the manifold wisdom of God, Eph. iii. 8, 9.

That Christianity has delivered to us the best rules of life, that all the morality of the heathen falls short of the directions we meet with here, that "the grace of God which brings salvation teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world," is what we may affirm. And though the proof of it would be a large work, yet really it is a very easy one. There needs no more, in order to it, than opening many branches of duty, and comparing what the gospel says upon these heads, with the lessons of philosophers. The dispensations they were under are said to be "times of ignorance," but ours is a heavenly vision; it calls men to repent and turn to God, and do things meet for repentance.

But then the question is, why there is any thing more in religion than commandments? Why, in a life of duty, there must be a looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour? and why we ought to consider him as having given himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works?

In answer to this, I would first lay down my assertion, and then maintain it. I do, therefore, without any recoil affirm, that the mysteries which God has revealed in the gospel are the glory of that dispensation; that the rules of duty had been imperfect without them; that they are suited to all the works of grace in our hearts, and all its employment in our lives; that we could not have known what is good, in doing justice, loving mercy, and walking humbly with our God, had he not shown it to us in this light.

These doctrines are so far from being unconcerned with practice, that the whole is a "Mystery of Godliness."

How well they are placed in our religion you will see by the following particulars: 1. We are thus led to an esteem for the salvation itself that infinite Wisdom has contrived: 2. We have the best arguments for our duty from the incarnation, satisfaction and resurrection of Jesus Christ: 3. We have the noblest example of all practical holiness from God's being manifest in the flesh: 4. We are inclined and encouraged to the duty of prayer, by this new and living way that is consecrated for us: 5. We have the greatest hopes of succeeding in the whole course of our duty, from the method of redemption that is now established: 6. We have the principles of all practical religion enlarged and refreshed by the mysteries that are laid before us: 7. We are made low in our own eyes, because of the ignorance that is in us: 8. We see the necessity of depending upon the Spirit for illumination: 9. We are taught a greater value for the revelation which God has given of himself; and 10. It draws out our desires after heaven, where those things are no longer to be seen, through a glass darkly, but in God's own light we shall see their light.

Of this advantage are the mysteries of godliness. Without them these noble ends could not have been answered. The best rules of life must have lost their design, and lain waste in the book of God. We have the knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins, through the tender mercy of our God; the day-spring that visits us from on high, gives light to those that sit in darkness, and guides their feet into the way of peace. When the law is established by faith, it gets a firmness and an influence that it could never have had any other way. Rom. iii. 31.

1. By the mysteries of the gospel we are led to an esteem for the salvation itself, which God has given us, because thus we see it was the contrivance of infinite wisdom. The "faith of God's elect," and

"the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness," are "in hope of eternal life," which God has manifested through the preaching that is committed to his ministers. Tit. i. 1—3. There is more of the divine love to be admired in the second covenant than in the first. Adam's religion, as far as we know it, was "that the man who doeth those things shall live by them." And in that dispensation he was to adore the goodness of his maker, who suffered himself to be sought unto, and visited by the work of his own hands.

But the recovery of this happiness when it was lost, is a thing more out of the way. There is a compass to be taken in the contrivance. The law was included in a short revelation, Obey God's authority, and thou shalt have his favour. There was no more for God to do than to make known his will. But when justice had been provoked, and goodness abused, in order to give mercy a new course for its glory, there are methods to be found out, oppositions removed, an incensed nature must be reconciled, a polluted one restored. And, therefore, when "the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man" now appears, it looks otherwise than it did in paradise. The revelation brings along with it more beneficence, in that it is "not by works of righteousness that we have done, but according to his mercy that he saves us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." Tit. iii. 4—6. Here is pains to be taken. Here is a change to be wrought. This work he sheds on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

Our first parents would have valued any manifestation that God made of himself to them. When they heard his voice in the cool of the day, it might have cheered their souls, though they had done nothing to lose his favour. But what is this to the discoveries that are now sent among a lost race! What is man, since the fall, that God is mindful of him, and the son of man that he now visits him! The salvation that we should have deserved in paradise, must have

been paid in as the wages of duty; but to be saved by the manifestation of a God in the flesh, by his bringing in an everlasting righteousness; to be made happy at his expense as a high priest, and by his virtue as a king; these are new endearments to the favour. "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believes." It represents our happiness as "bought with a price;" we must value it, not only for what it is worth, but for what it actually cost, "the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish, and without spot." 1 Pet. i. 19.

When our Saviour tells the person who was willing to justify himself, "This do and thou shalt live," he does not only put him upon a thing impossible, but in that scheme he hides the glory of divine mercy. Could we do that by which we may live, there would be little room to admire the goodness of God, and much less to adore his wisdom. Salvation had come cheap; we had made it ourselves. But when we are told, in order to it, there is an old guilt to be done away, and a new nature to be implanted, it shows that an infinite mind must have been at work about it.

The word of reconciliation, that he has committed to us is, "That God is in Christ Jesus reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses to them." This is a great deal more than he needed to have said to Adam. There was then nothing but a continuing the communion in which he was placed at first. But now, here is a reconciling us to himself. And therefore, he would have blessed our first parents without a Mediator, as he did the angels; they might have come at once to his throne. But now there is a middle person between God and man; it is "in Christ Jesus" that he reconciles them; and this is done in a way that our first parents had no occasion for, and that is, by not imputing their trespasses to them; they wanted no pardon; but we are to be considered as innocent, though we are guilty; and as not doing the many things that we have done. Now, by what method, or upon what foundation does he pronounce

those to be righteous whom he knows to be sinful? He makes "him to be sin for us, who knows no sin, that we may be made the righteousness of God in him." So that here is a new way to happiness, which would never have been known, had our nature continued in its primitive purity.

O! what a salvation is this, that comes from something else besides the equity of the legislator! What a friend is our God, who would not only have rewarded the righteousness of our works, but has employed himself upon a scheme that imputes to us "righteousness without works!" We who were afar off are made nigh by the blood of Christ, for he is our peace. He is our hope. Our way is through the vail, that is, his flesh. Is not this a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation? Sing aloud, ye waste places of the earth, the Lord has comforted his people, and made bare his holy arm. Look upon your happiness as a thing projected by infinite wisdom. Declare the decree. It is the purpose that he purposed in himself. You now lay hold on eternal life, which God that cannot lie promised before the world began. See your portion in heaven, not as a thing that grew out of your duties, as the fruit of an imperfect religion here, but as a contrivance that was laid before time began, and shall be performed when time shall be no more. Your holiness is not the *root* of the scheme, but one of the branches. "God has from the beginning chosen us to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth," 2 Thess. ii. 13. This the apostle admires, though he lived a long while before he felt the design, when it pleased God who separated him from his mother's womb to reveal his Son in him. He has chosen his people to be rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom that he promised to those that love him.

2. We have the best arguments for our duty from the incarnation, satisfaction, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. "God has appointed us to obtain salvation by Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him."

These are things people object against. A God manifest in the flesh is called nonsense; an innocent person's suffering for the guilty is an injustice; and a dead man's rising again is an impossibility. I answer, upon their principles, that if these things had been told us by any other than God himself, we might have joined with them in a determined infidelity. We could never have believed any of them upon less than a divine evidence. These mysteries would have borne all the hard names that they give them, if we had received them any other way than by the revelation of a "God that cannot lie." But, if they are true, as every thing that he says must be, do but see what good they do to the practical part of religion.

We are established by this gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, and the revelation of the mystery, which is made manifest to all nations for the obedience of faith, Rom. xvi. 25, 26. They that talk so much of morality, can, in no stories, give us those examples of it that we have in the Bible. What acts of justice and mercy do we find in the lives of the Apostles! They could truly say, with an appeal to the whole world, "We have wronged no man, we have defrauded no man." But besides that, what pains did they take. What dangers did they run in diffusing the gospel! And why was all this? Could they not have made as great a figure without it? Yes; but it is evident that they were friends to the world, influenced by an enlarged compassion to their whole race; and therefore carried about with them what they thought was the way for mankind to be happy. What was it that put them upon this, but one of the *mysteries* that are recorded in my text? "The love of Christ constrains us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died, that they that live should not live to themselves, but to him that died for them and rose again." You see here how they argue from the story of a Saviour in its several branches.

The first principle is, that Christ loved them. And the very thought of that draws and constrains them,

(συνεχει,) to make all their lives a tribute to him. This was not a spirit of enthusiasm, or a fanatical vapour, but what they deduced in a vein of cool and genuine reasoning. "We thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead." This love of his shows them what they were in themselves, impotent, unhappy; under a sentence, and preparing for an execution. What a reach of mercy was this! He died "that they who live should not live to themselves;" the argument is very good, for they did not live *by* themselves; without him they had not lived at all; "but to Him who died for them" to deserve their duty, "and rose again" to employ it.

What is there like this in any other collection of precepts? How should we have had this fire of the altar, these principles of zeal to our duty, if religion had contained none of the mysteries that are here mentioned? All our holiness is thrown into this sort of language; we are baptized into Christ Jesus, baptized into his death; we are buried with him by baptism into death; and as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we are to walk in newness of life. Our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin may be destroyed, Rom. vi. 3, 4, 6. The meaning of all these phrases we have afterwards: "Sin shall not have dominion over you;" and the reason why it shall not is, "because ye are not under the law, but under grace." Suppose God had told us all that he has now said about our obedience, and given us none of these arguments, what would the consequence of that have been? It would be only making this world to be one of the outer-rooms of hell, where a set of creatures lived, who were taught indeed, but not persuaded. Whereas the great work of grace is not only to make us a knowing, but "a willing people in the day of his power." Religion indeed has always been a tribute to Him who made us. "He has made us and not we ourselves," is a universal argument; but we find from all experience that it will not do. It is not the common character of our nature that the Apostle lays

down; "None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself." All *ought* to say, "if we live, we live unto the Lord." But how comes it to be so with them in fact? They know, that "to this end Christ both died and rose again and revived, that he might be the Lord both of the dead and living."

3. We have the noblest example of all practical holiness from God's being manifest in the flesh. As he taught the law without the darkness in which others had involved it, so he showed it without any corruption in his life. "He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." Hence he stands as the great pattern; "be ye followers of me," says the apostle, "as I am of Christ." Now, this had never been, if he had not come down into the flesh, and dwelt amongst us.

We are bid to be "followers of God as dear children." The Scripture has all along, in the several parts of duty, directed us hither. Thus when we are called to humility, it is in the brightest view of that grace and practice; "let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but took on him the form of a servant," Phil. ii. 5—7. As an evidence of this principle, we are to be patient, and to endure the disorders of those to whom the grace of God has been more sparing. "We that are strong are to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves," Rom. xv. 1. 3. Why so? "For even Christ pleased not himself." This is what he argued in his own person, "Let him that will be great among you, be the servant of all, even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." "I am among you as one that serves." Thus, when we are employed about that necessary work of forgiving injuries, whether there are reasons for it in nature, I shall not now examine, but I am very sure the best of them must be fetched from revelation. We "put on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercy, humbleness of mind, meekness and long-suffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving

one another, even as God has for Christ's sake forgiven us." When we are exhorted to a gentle, easy, quiet carriage, we learn it of him who is meek and lowly, and so find rest to our souls. Our charity to those in trouble, looks to him as the great example. "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich," 2 Cor. viii. 9. If he, our Lord and Master, washed their feet, they ought to wash one another's. He has given an example, and we should do as he has done; and how strong is the motive? The servant is not greater than his lord, nor he that is sent, greater than he that sent him.

Do not say these rules were sufficient without examples; that is talking against all the experience of our nature. It is not in vain that we are compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses, but we *look off* from them, or rather look up above them, (ἀφοῤῥωντες) to Jesus the author and finisher of our faith. We consider him who endured the contradiction of sinners against himself, lest we be weary and faint in our minds. Our religion is formed in similitude to him; "both he that sanctifies, and they that are sanctified are all of one, wherefore he is not ashamed to call them brethren." And it is practised in walking after him; "If any man serve me, let him follow me, and where I am, there shall my servant be." There is a peace that flows into us, not only from our keeping the directions, but agreeing with the example that is set before us. "Herein we have boldness in the day of judgment, that as he was, so we are in the world." What would have become of all this, if God was not manifest in the flesh?

4. We are in particular inclined and encouraged to the duty of prayer, by this "new and living way that is consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh," Heb. x. 20. This is the main employment of religion, and whatever helps it on must be of the greatest value to our character and our peace. We will suppose that in all nations there are some

crying to him who made them. They feel after him, if haply they may find him, for he is not far from any one of us Prayer is a confession of sin, a begging for pardon, and any other mercy that we want, and a gratitude for those that we either have or hope for. But how heavily would this work have gone on, if there had been none of these mysteries in religion?

In what manner must you have confessed your sins, if God himself had not given you "boldness to enter into the holiest of all by the blood of Jesus?" Heb. x. 19. What is the difference between the howlings of conscience here, and those in hell, if there is no regard to pardoning love? It is upon this ground that he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. We can say this only from a belief that there is a blood of sprinkling, speaking better things than the blood of Abel.

It is true, we may tell God our wants, but what hope have we of being supplied? Strip the duty of prayer, of all its relations to the doctrines of the gospel, and you take away its arguments. "The law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did, by the which we draw nigh unto God," Heb. vii. 19. It is because Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, is passed into the heavens, that we come boldly to the throne of grace, in hope of obtaining mercy and finding grace to help in every time of need. We have "a High Priest over the house of God," and therefore, "draw near with a true heart, in a full assurance of faith," Heb. x. 21, 22. There is no coming to the Father but by Him who is "the way, the truth, and the life." Prayer had been a heartless and helpless work, if it was not for this provision: but now "we have boldness of access with confidence, through the faith of him. If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

5. We have the best hope of succeeding in the whole work of our duty, from the redemption that is now established. The ground of all religion is laid

in this, that they who by a patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, honour and immortality, shall have eternal life: that they who do good shall come to the resurrection of life, and they that do evil, to the resurrection of damnation. But from whence have you any encouragement this way, if you throw out the promises of the gospel, and the mysteries upon which they are founded?

Suppose I was to argue with a polite heathen, and ask him, why he does so much good in the world? he will answer, it is in hopes of a future reward. Well, but how does he know this? I take it for granted, he will argue from God's justice; that he renders to every man according to his works. Thus far it is very well, but the main difficulty is yet to come. He cannot but find himself a sinner, there is a great deal of his duty that he has not done; and if the justice of God rewards what is good, it must lay him under an equal necessity to punish what is bad. If indeed, I were pure and spotless, I might lift up my face before him, but as it is not so, what is to become of me now?

To say that God will pardon, is really talking at random, out of the gospel; that he will do so is true, but that is more than either they or any one else can know without a revelation. If a priest should assure them that their *works* deserve eternal life, yet he leaves an awakened conscience uneasy, if he cannot tell them what becomes of their *sins*.

Now, it is from the satisfaction made by Christ, that we see how our happiness consists with all the glory of God; that if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us. In this dispensation there is no room for despair from the greatness, the multitude, and aggravation of our iniquities. If our sins "be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; if they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Our God will not only have mercy, but "abundantly pardon." The heathen religion, in the loosest way of teaching it, supposed their good works merited a reward for themselves, and a pardon for their vices.

But this would only give hope to the best among them. There is nothing in their way of thinking, like salvation to the chief of sinners. We know from the gospel alone, that with our God is plenteous redemption, and he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.

6. By these mysteries the principles of all practical religion are enlarged and encouraged. It is in a meditation upon these that we stir up the grace of God that is in us. We are "therefore steadfast, unmoveable, and always abounding in the work of God, as we know that our labour is not in vain in the Lord." The apostle argues this from the resurrection of the dead, in a very long chapter. From hence he concludes that we ought to be steady in the ways of God; nay, to abound in them, to do every thing better, be daily throwing more life and virtue into all our duties. And thus we find it is in fact. We grow languid and dull, when our thoughts withdraw themselves from the great doctrines of Christianity. When Peter had mentioned the "sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow," he says in this view, we must "gird up the loins of our minds, and be sober and hope to the end." It is an allusion either to travellers or racers, that put themselves into a posture for all the length of their journey, or all the toil of their course; and in that we are not only doing our duty, but we wait "for the grace that is to be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ:" either the revelation we shall have *of him*, or the revelation we shall have *by him;* either the grace that he shows in himself, or the grace that he brings to his people.

7. We are by this means kept low in our own eyes; as we find there are things above the reach of nature, and beyond the comprehension of faith. There is nothing we are apt to be more proud of than our knowledge. "Vain man would be wise." We had rather be distinguished by what we *know*, than by what we *do*. This was the primitive wickedness of our nature. Our first parents wanted nothing to

make them more holy; *that* was not their temptation; but they saw the tree was desirable to make one *wise*.

Now God makes the sons of men to "see that themselves are beasts." "He destroys the wisdom of the wise, and brings to nought the understanding of the prudent." And in the work of redemption we may say, "Where is the wise, where is the scribe, where is the disputer of this world? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For, after that in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom knew not God, (either their wisdom was insufficient or opposite to that knowledge,) it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." "The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God."

It is easy to see what would have been the effect of having no mysteries in religion. We may imagine *that*, from the temper of the men who say there are none. For "the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness." The scorn which they pour out upon others, the "cruel mockings" which they deal abroad among the people of God, against the faith once delivered to the saints, is an argument that the religion they despise was contrived on purpose to "hide pride from man." To those that look aright into it, it does so. If a person talk in a disparaging way of the mighty ocean, and, because he has never seen it, imagine it was only like a large river, and that he could easily conceive where it began, and where it ended; the best way would be to send him to sea, and when he has been some time without sight of land, he will learn to think and speak after another manner. Just so it is here; what a sinner knows nothing at all of, he can easily explain; but when the grace of God gives him the knowledge of the truth, with that he finds his own ignorance. The further he goes the deeper it is. Like the bow of the sky that we imagine touches the hill where it closes the sight, but when we come there, it is as far off as

before. We cannot suppose ourselves to have apprehended, but this one thing we do, forget what is behind, and reach to those things that are before, Phil. iii. 13.

8. This shows us the necessity of depending upon the Spirit for illumination, as well as upon Christ for acceptance. We should never inquire after this light, if there were not "deep things of God." But this makes it the continual employment of a Christian to call in discoveries from above, that he may apprehend that for which he is apprehended of Christ Jesus. We receive not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we may know the things that are freely given to us of God. This is the great blessing, for which the apostle ceased not to make mention in his prayers, That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ might give them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him. For this cause he bowed his knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus, that he would grant, according to the riches of his glory, that they might comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth and length and depth and height; and know the love of Christ, Eph. i. 16, 17.—iii. 14. 16. 18.

9. This teaches a greater value for the revelation God has made of himself. The Bible contains indeed the plainest rules of duty, for which we admire it; but there also we have the *Wisdom of God in a mystery*. And if these are things that we know but in part, how much should we have been in the dark, had God said nothing at all about them? It is a low jest, when we are laughed at for admiring what we do not understand; and the retort is but just upon those who make it, that if this is *their* principle, we may conclude it is *very little* that they admire. For our parts, we read and adore, we see but through a glass darkly; and we may say to one of them as Elihu did to a wiser man, Hearken unto this, O Job, stand still and consider the wondrous works of God: Dost thou know when God disposed them, and

caused the light of his cloud to shine?—Teach us what we shall say to him, for we cannot order our speech by reason of darkness.

10. This draws out our desires towards heaven; without which there can be neither the purity nor the comfort of religion. We long to be where the veil is taken off from the object, and the fetters from the faculty. "We know in part, and prophesy in part, but when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away; now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face. It does not appear what we shall be, but when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is," 1 Cor. xiii. 9, 10. 12.—1 John iii. 2.

Besides the title of mystery that is given to the Christian religion, there are two words more in this verse: 1st. That it is a great mystery: 2dly. That it is so without controversy. These are what I shall now inquire into, as they lead us to further views of that doctrine which God has made to be the glory of the best dispensation that ever his people came under; the report we have of Him, who has "appeared to abolish death, and bring life and immortality to light by the gospel."

(1.) When the Apostle calls this a "*great mystery*," I suppose he does it in a way of pre-eminence to what is contained in other religions, more especially these two:

First, The mysteries of the heathen. These made a mighty noise in the world. In particular the Eleusinian mysteries, which were taught at Ephesus. To these no persons were admitted till they had been trained up five or seven years in a way of preparation for them. They were so highly esteemed, that the Emperor Adrian went twice into those parts to be acquainted with them, upon which I cannot but have a suspicion of their being changed. These were then accounted the best entertainments of religion, and yet they who were brought into the secret must never open their mouths about them, but only make

their boast of privileges that to all others were unknown.

Secondly, There were mysteries in the Jewish religion. God made his wonderful works to be remembered. They thought of his loving kindness in the midst of his temple, and he was terrible out of his holy places. "Theirs was the glory," which comprehended the pillar of cloud and fire that secured their marches through the wilderness; and the great appearance that was both the guard and the ornament of their temple. Timothy, to whom this epistle was directed, had an opportunity of hearing much about both these sorts of mysteries. For as his father was a Greek, and himself uncircumcised for many years, so he could be no stranger to those things of which the Gentiles always boasted. And, on the other hand, as his grandmother and mother were serious people, and from a child had brought him up in the knowledge of the Scriptures, so he was taught to admire all the true mysteries in which God had revealed himself to the Jews. Well, the Apostle tells him, that here was a mystery greater than what the one pretended to, and what the other really contained.

1. As to the mysteries in their temple at Ephesus, they are all outdone by our gospel, upon these four accounts; that our mysteries are learned all at once, they refer us to our greatest happiness, they come from God himself, and they are diffused over the whole world.

(1.) The mystery of Godliness is in this respect greater than any among the heathen, in that we learn it *at once*. Here are no years thrown away in a tedious preparation. The gospel is not acquainted with those wretched arts of keeping people in ignorance, as an introduction to future knowledge. No, no; the entrance of the word gives light; it breaks in at once. The people are all taught of God, and every one that hears and learns of the Father comes to Christ. This "sure word of prophecy," to which we do well to take heed, "shines as a light in a dark place." All was

confusion before, but that is done away; "the darkness is past, and the true light now shines." "We all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory." "They shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know me, from the least to the greatest." The fathers have known him from the beginning, the little children have known the Father. This is our first benefit by the ministry of the gospel. It is appointed to open our eyes, and turn us from darkness to light.

There is no keeping of people in a preparatory dulness. That is plainly the trick of covetous men. And wo to those who "take away the key of knowledge." The proceedings of Divine grace are more generous; so that if the Ephesians boasted what mysteries they had put themselves into the way of learning, and that in the space of a few years they could know the great secrets of religion that were revealed no where else but in their temple, Timothy had it in his power to demolish all that confidence. He might tell them, that Christianity had its mysteries, which we come to know, without all that laborious search, or running a vain round for many years. "The least in the kingdom of God" was acquainted, the first moment of his conversion, with a great deal more than they could pretend to. We have "the true light that lighteth every man that comes into the world."

(2.) This mystery is about matters of great importance to our final happiness. "This is life eternal, to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent." Here we learn, what all the liberality of the Gentile priesthood neither could nor would have told us, that there is a way of redemption which brings "glory to God in the highest, on earth peace," and reveals a "good will towards men." Here is a doctrine fitted to the tortures of an awakened conscience, and all the entanglement of a guilty nature. Here we are led to admire what God has done to

make us happy, with a glory to his justice as well as his mercy.

They could never know God's love to mankind, whilst they were strangers to him as "manifest in the flesh." This is a nobler sort of evidence of his regard to human nature, than we can have in all the bounties of creation and providence. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life," John iii. 16. How could they imagine any repairs to the injuries of a broken law without a satisfaction? And this they could never have apprehended, had not He who was manifest in the flesh been "justified in the Spirit." Our redemption is in Christ Jesus, "whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believes in Jesus," Rom. iii. 24–26. They must be strangers to all this till Christ Jesus was "preached unto the Gentiles, and believed on in the world." Nor could they know where to rest their confidence; what mighty arm was able to bear the faith of a soul. But we "know in whom we have believed," and that he can "save to the uttermost," because he was "received up into glory." What signifies it to have a company of secrets and rarities, that make us neither better in our practice, nor easier in our expectations? You see, the wonders of the Christian religion are no vain thing, because they are your life. They begin the life that is now your principle, they open and assure the life that will be your portion.

(3.) These mysteries were given us by God himself. The long time that the heathen religion would keep us waiting, and the new set of doctrines that were to be learned every seven years, had in it all the appearance of artifice. It looks as like priestcraft as any thing in the world could do. But "God is the rock; his work is perfect, a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he." There are none of

these frauds in the discoveries, to leave us uncertain about the author.

The prophets of old were not only "moved by the Holy Ghost," but the hand of God came upon them in such ways that others knew it was from the Lord. The poor of the flock that waited upon Zechariah knew it was the word of the Lord, Zech. xi. 11. The hand of the Lord God fell upon Ezekiel as he sat in his house, and the elders of Judah sat before him, Ezekiel viii. 1. In the New Testament the great preacher was our blessed Saviour. His enemies knew that he was a teacher come from God, because no man could do those things that he did except God was with him. And as he began to preach the great salvation, so this was afterwards confirmed to us by them that heard him. Nor do we depend only upon their veracity, but God himself bare them witness with divers signs and wonders, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will. They that received the word, received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth the word of God, which effectually worketh also in them that believe, 1 Thess. ii. 13.

I doubt not, but the priests among the Heathen would tell their pupils that all the discoveries they made came from heaven. Just as some do now, who plainly promote the Gentile religion under the Christian name, and are not ashamed to abuse the world with ridiculous stories of saints and angels appearing, nay, of the Virgin Mary's showing herself to the heroes of the little factions among them; "intruding into things which they have not seen, vainly puffed up in their fleshly minds." We may confront these fables, as we should those of the heathen, that it is unworthy of the spirits of just men made perfect, to come from heaven to earth upon those childish errands. For the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward, for the memory of them is forgotten; also their love and their hatred and their envy is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun. They

that die in the Lord do rest from their labours. Eccl. ix. 5, 6. Rev. xiv. 13.

The revelation that God has given us, is worthy of himself. It is the record about his Son. It sets his own perfections in the best light for our esteem and worship. We never see the glory of God so well as in the person of Jesus Christ. This is the *greatest* thing that ever he did, as well as the best and kindest. This was more than making the world, and shows us his power, wisdom, and goodness, moving in a nobler design. When he separated the light from the darkness, the waters from the earth; appointed time to make the first division, and a firmament the second, he looked on what he had done, and "it was all very good." But the partitions that he makes between light and darkness in the redemption of mankind, are more august and durable. Here light and darkness do not succeed and roll after one another as they do in our world, but are distributed into proper states and regions. For his enemies, there is a continual "horror of darkness," and for those that are saved, there is an inheritance with the saints in light, where their sun shall no more go down; for there is no night there, but the glory of the Lord doth lighten the place, and the Lamb is the light thereof, Rev. xxi. 23.

(4.) These mysteries are to be diffused and made known. The obligation to keep all secret which they learned at the temple of Ephesus, was cruel to the world, and could have no other influence than to bloat up with pride and vanity the people that had them. Thus they were rendered useless to the creation, and only cumbered the ground where they lived.

But is Christianity such a vain peculiarity? No; all they who have learned the things of God, are to let their "light shine before men." They must "hold forth the word of life;" they are to be "blameless and harmless as the sons of God without rebuke, shining as lights in the world." Thus we read of adorning the gospel of God our Saviour in all things. The whole body of Christians are a royal priesthood, a peculiar people, to show forth the praises of him

who has called them out of darkness into a marvellous light. It is both their duty and inclination to call others into the grace wherein they stand. In this temper Christ is a pattern to them, "I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart, I have not concealed thy faithfulness and thy truth." Psa. xl. 10.

Thus may the mysteries of godliness be called *great*, in opposition to the vain pretensions of the heathen. What they boasted of was a needless toil, and very oft a grand impertinence. There were all the suspicions of its being the artifice of those that told it, and it left the people who received it as useless to the world as it found them. Whereas the mystery of godliness is great from the present benefit that we have by it; from the relation that it bears to our whole felicity both in earth and heaven; from the characters of a divine original that are upon it; and from the diffusion that it is to have abroad.

2. There were undeniable mysteries among the Jews. God dealt with them as he had not done with any other nation. They were called to "remember the marvellous things that he had wrought, the wonders and the judgments of his mouth." This was the peculiar duty of "the seed of Abraham his servant, and the children of Jacob his chosen." And yet in regard to these we may say, "*Great is the mystery of godliness.*" There is a distinction that God himself has given between the wonders of the New Testament and those of the Old. They are more continuing, they refer us to themselves, they come in a nobler way, and are attended with a greater influence.

(1.) Our mysteries are distinguished from those that God gave to the Jews, by their continuance. Theirs were only so many "figures for the time then present." Ours, as the apostle says, are "not of this building," Heb. ix. 9. 11. The very temple itself is called a *tabernacle*, to show that it was to be taken down. So that all the wonders of the place within the vail, of the mercy-seat upon the ark, and the cherubims of glory shading it with their wings, were

limited. The time would come when the church of God should have nothing further to learn by them. The law was but "our schoolmaster to lead us to Christ," and therefore we are now "no longer under a schoolmaster." But Christ is come, "a high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, that is to say, not of this building; and not by the blood of bulls and goats," which had only a temporary use, and a temporary signification, "but by his own blood he has entered into the holiest of all, having obtained eternal redemption for us." Heb. ix. 12, 13.

The high priest's going into the holy place once a year, with the blood of others, was a proper emblem of the way in which the atonement was made, by an officer of God's own appointing, and in a method that showed his satisfaction. But now the sense of such a ceremony is all over. If it was to be repeated again, we could not understand it. Whereas the thing signified carries in it an eternal propriety, that Christ having suffered for the sins of many, should go, not into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true, but into heaven itself, there to appear in the presence of God for us. Here men that die receive tithes, but there He receives them of whom it is witnessed that he lives. He is made not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. The law makes men priests that have infirmity, but the word of the oath that is since the law, makes the Son, who is perfected, (τετελειωμενος,) for evermore. He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much he is the Mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, there should have been found no place for the second; for finding fault with them, he saith, Behold the days come when I will make a new covenant. In that he saith a new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now, that which decays and waxes old, is ready to vanish away. Heb. vii. viii.

(2.) Our mysteries refer us to themselves. The Jewish had a respect to something else. Though God had appointed those ceremonial atonements and purifications, yet that maxim must have been always true, that "it is not possible the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin," Heb. x. 4. What proportion is there between the sin of man and the blood of a brute? And much less can a sacrifice be a suitable offering to the justice of Him who is a Spirit, and will be worshipped in spirit and in truth. But, as we are told the law had "a shadow of good things to come," it still carried on the thoughts and expectations of the people to a better hope. Their temple was a "glorious high throne," as it was a figure of the body of Christ, in which all the fulness of the Godhead was to dwell. Their mercy-seat above the ark was a type of our throne of grace. Their high-priest, who had been called of God, was covered with an ephod, had a fair mitre upon his head, and a breastplate with the names of the children of Israel upon his heart. This was a figure of Christ Jesus, all whose "garments do smell with myrrh, aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made him glad," Ps. xlv. 8. Their sacrifices were typical of his death, and the righteousness that he should bring in; their Jerusalem, of our heaven. And without such a reference as this, all their worship had been in vain. Hence the apostle speaks with a contempt of those things that had once a divine institution, partly because their use was then over, and partly because they had never any other than a relative goodness. Thus he calls it "a worldly sanctuary," and the worship there, "weak and beggarly elements," and "carnal ordinances imposed on them until the time of reformation," Heb. ix. 1. 10.

Now, the mysteries of Christianity never carry us beyond themselves. We rest in the great redemption itself, that God should be manifest in the flesh, and justified in the Spirit. There is no going any further. These are the very things that feed our faith, and extend our hope. This was "the hope of the promise made of God unto the fathers, unto which the

twelve tribes instantly serving God day and night hoped to come."

(3.) Our mysteries come in a nobler way, in a method more agreeable to the lofty nature of a rational soul. God treats us now, in the New Testament, more like spiritual beings, than he used to do his ancient people. We have nothing so gross as what the apostle calls by the name of "carnal ordinances," and the "rudiments of the world." Their building of a temple was an emblem of the incarnation; their offering sacrifices of the great atonement. And thus were their minds instructed about the method of God's restoring man to himself. But now he has struck off all these carnal conveyances from the doctrine, and made it known by a revelation that is pure and divine; so that "what saith the righteousness of faith? not, who shall go into heaven, to bring down Christ from above, or who shall descend into the deep to bring him from beneath? but the word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart. If thou believe with thy heart that Jesus died, and confess with thy mouth that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved," Rom. x. 6—9.

(4.) This mystery is attended with a greater influence, both as to purity and peace. "The law made nothing perfect;" it still left them in a wrong way about their devotions; "but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which hope we now draw nigh unto God," in a way that they could not use. So it was as to comfort. In their dispensation, "those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually, could never make the comers thereunto perfect; for then, would they not have ceased to be offered?" Yes surely, "because the worshippers once purged, should have had no more conscience of sins; but in those sacrifices, there is a remembrance made again of sins every year," Heb. x. 1—3.

It is otherwise in the Christian religion; for we are "sanctified by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. Every priest stands daily ministering, and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which

can never take away sins; but this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down at the right hand of God." He had then done, and gone through the whole atonement. "Whereof the Holy Ghost is a witness to us, in saying, their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin." And the consequence of the whole is, that "we have therefore boldness to enter into the holiest of all, by the blood of Jesus," Heb. vii. 11—19.

[2.] It is further said, that this mystery is great *without controversy*. There was room to dispute the original of the heathen wonders, those which their priests gave out. Men who loved to inquire into things, could not be without their suspicions, that fraud in the design, and confidence in the revelation, went a great way into those pretensions. Among all the wise men of the nations, and in all their kingdoms there is none like to our God; but they are altogether brutish and foolish. They inherited lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit. But here is a mystery that all confess.—Under this head, I shall observe four things.

1. It does not mean there should be no dispute about it. "The natural man" never did, and never will "receive the things of the Spirit of God; they are foolishness to him." "The preaching of the cross is to them that perish, foolishness." The Scripture has foretold this; and it is but in our age, as it has been in those before us; there is no new thing under the sun. Three causes may be assigned for it.

First, The enmity that there is in our nature to the things of God. Till we are a willing people, the light will be grievous to us. One dram of grace in the heart, is the best battery against all those carnal reasonings that we advance in opposition to the gospel. This pulls down the strong holds and every imagination, and brings all our high thoughts that exalt themselves against the knowledge of Christ, into subjection to him. Our understandings are vitiated as well as our affections; and as there is a principle

that says of God's commands, "what a weariness is it!" so there is another that says, what is as vile, of his doctrines, "they are foolishness," being only spiritually discerned.

We see what pains people will take to shift off a duty, how many excuses they find, what delays they run into, and how cunning and copious a corrupt nature is to express all its enmity against the authority of God. Thus laborious is our invention against a mystery. We will except, sometimes to the ground of a revelation, sometimes to the sufficiency of it, and again to the use of it. Either it is not declared to us at all, or not with evidence enough, or it is an indifference whether we believe it or not. Thus much are people upon their guard against the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus. If they cannot resist, they will flee; when they cannot shut out a conviction, they will run away from it. Now, what can this be owing to, but the ill turn that we got by the fall? They who are dead in trespasses and sins, are fulfilling the desires of the mind as well as of the flesh. It all proceeds from a hatred of God; and that is directed against his wisdom, as much as his government. We can no more endure the light that is about his throne, than the greatness that fills his law. The first wickedness of our nature consisted in a love of some wisdom that we were to get in our own way. From that time we have had a hatred of the wisdom that descends from above, both as it is pure and as it is peaceable. So that, it is no wonder that they who do evil hate the light; that the natural man who receives not the things of the Spirit of God, should count them foolishness.

Secondly, The Scripture has given us another reason of this, and that is the influence of Satan. "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the god of this world has blinded the eyes of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them," 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4. He was an early enemy to our Lord; and what he was to his person,

he will be to his doctrine. The dragon was wroth with the woman, and makes war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandment of God, and have the testimony of Jesus. The serpent who beguiled Eve, through his subtilty endeavours to corrupt our minds from the simplicity that is in Christ. Christ came to destroy Satan's empire, and therefore he takes the alarm, and does all that he can to resist the glorious Invader. As it is by the gospel that a Redeemer rides in the chariots of salvation, so we may expect the enemy will use his endeavours to disturb the wheels. Sometimes he does it by superstition, leading out the zeal of people into vain things that cannot profit; sometimes he pursues his design by persecution, "The devil shall cast some of you into prison, and ye shall have tribulation ten days," Rev. ii. 10; and sometimes in a more direct onset upon the great mysteries of godliness, teaching persons to deny the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ, and to bring upon themselves swift destruction. He shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth," Rev. xx. 8.

Thirdly, I believe a great deal of this opposition is owing to the terrors of an uneasy conscience. They dare not let this faculty look into the law of God, and therefore they set it a quarrelling with the gospel. Thus debauchery goes off into a wrangling. These hard questions are a ball thrown to the conscience, to keep it at play, and divert it from working and wounding within. It is for this reason, that several people who abhor the practice of religion, profess themselves to be champions against its mysteries; and what a poor delusion is this to secret qualms, that such and such a text is not in some ancient copies? What is that to those who live as without a God in the world, who cast off fear and restrain prayer before God? Is it not enough that they oppose Christianity in their lives, but must they do it also in their profession? It will be of no avail to them, another day, to plead the uncertain authority of some Scriptures. That is no excuse for swearing and immo-

rality. All copies agree in the truth of these words, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless, who taketh his name in vain."

2. This mystery is without controversy to all the ages of God's people. They have owned it, and have done so practically. This has kept them humble in their own eyes, and made them earnest for the spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of what they do not understand. They have acknowledged the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ. This has given them a temper of love to others. Any one that looks into the great doctrines of salvation will own, that the more he sees of their mystery, the less he is capable of persecuting those who do not believe them. He finds the truth of the observation, "No man can say that Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Ghost," 1 Cor. xii. 3. He wonders not at the ignorance of people, and the opposition that rises from it. It is only the grace of God that has made it otherwise with *him*. The Jews had "a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge; for they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish a righteousness of their own, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God. Even to this day when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart; and when they turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away," 2 Cor. iii. 15, 16.

A person who guards a mystery in the Christian religion with penal laws, knows nothing what belongs to it. He that will force the natural man to receive what he knows before-hand he cannot receive, is guilty of the same crime with Simon Magus; he thought the gift of God might be bought, and these think it may be sold. This punishing of heresy, and rewarding of orthodoxy, is not teaching the Christian religion as if it were mysterious. If we really apprehended, there was no knowing these things, till God himself had opened our eyes, we should take every penal law to be a reproach upon him; and it is adding to the misery of sinners, if such as he marks out for

darkness in another world, are to suffer persecution in this. "The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle to all men, apt to teach, patient; in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if peradventure God will give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will." 2 Tim. ii. 24—26.

3. This mystery is without controversy to those whom the grace of God has brought from the darkness of infidelity. They will say as Jacob did, surely the Lord was in this truth, and I knew it not; this is the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven. They give way to the sweet excursions of joy and wonder. What they used to despise as mere foolishness, possesses and fills their esteem. And a testimony from such people as these, ought the more to be valued, because it shows us there is a conquest of their prejudice. "That which had not been told them, have they seen; and that which they had not heard, do they consider."

I will go no further in the search of examples than the New Testament, which may be called "the book of the wars of the Lord." There we see what methods he took to show his power, and prosper his love. We find that the bare preaching of the word, without any addition of force, temptation or interest, has sunk down into the hearts of men. The *Jews* to whom the cross was a stumbling-block, and the *Greeks* who called it foolishness, came to see that it was the wisdom of God, and the power of God."

As an instance of the former sort, I look upon the story of Saul to be the most eminent. His contempt of Christ was fortified with Jewish learning, and the prepossession of a mighty zeal for the traditions of the fathers. He persecuted the church of God above measure, and wasted it. He thought within himself that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Many of the saints he shut up in prison, and compelled them to blaspheme. This

shows us what a turn his prejudice gave him; that he put these poor people upon denying and deriding the great doctrines of redemption. As they were his abhorrence, so he would make them theirs. He was taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous towards God, persecuting this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women. But what a renovation of judgment did he undergo! He was brought to see the wisdom of a design which before he hated. There was nothing that he so much valued as "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord." Formerly he saw no glory in this revelation: but now "the unsearchable riches of Christ" are what he regards with an esteem in himself, and what he thought it his honour to preach among the Gentiles. What he used to set at nought, he now endeavoured to make all men see, viz. "the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world has been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ," Eph. iii. 9. And though he once thought it beneath the study of men, yet now he sees, that unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places must be made known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, Eph. iii. 10. He that was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, and after the most perfect manner of the law had been a Pharisee, desires to "know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified." What he took for gain, he found to be loss; yea, he counted all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord. Here his thoughts were entertained and his affections employed. Though to him, as well as others, the things of the Spirit had been foolishness, yet from this intellectual antipathy, he comes to believe what he heard, to admire what he believed, and to improve what he admired; following after, if he might apprehend that for which he was apprehended of Christ Jesus.

As instances of the latter sort, take the Athenians and the Ephesians, and you will find that the grace of God was exceeding abundant towards them, with

faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. Their learning bows itself, as Dagon did before the ark; it falls flat, and breaks to pieces. Though at Athens they had all the scorn that could be, for the person and doctrine of the apostle, yet "some of them believed," when they heard him more fully upon the revelation that he brought among them. They that called him a babbler, and a setter forth of strange gods, are said to cleave unto him upon his telling them, that God had appointed a day in which he would judge the world in righteousness, by that Man whom he has ordained, whereof he has given assurance to all men, in that he raised him from the dead, Acts xvii. 18, 31. It was Jesus and the resurrection which they called by the name of "strange gods" before; and yet now they saw the wisdom and empire of the Divine nature in that contrivance; that it gave us notions worthy of a God, and fitted to an immortal soul.

But the most eminent instance of this kind, we read of at Ephesus, where "the name of the Lord was magnified, and many that believed came and confessed, and showed their deeds: Many of them also who used curious arts, brought their books together, and burnt them before all men, and they counted the price of them, and found it to be fifty thousand pieces of silver; so mightily grew the word of God and prevailed," Acts xix. 17—20. The people here described, were got into such an engaging study, as would give them an opinion that they had something wiser in their own keeping than these apostles could teach them. And yet you see what havock and destruction the grace of God carried into all that sort of learning. They confessed and showed their deeds; that they were vain and vile, foolish and wicked. Nay, they brought their books together, as if they had agreed in a common act of reproach upon the science itself. They burned them before all men; though with what expense and care they had collected them, you see by the price they came to, which was fifty thousand pieces of silver, that is,

about fifteen hundred pounds.* If any people had it in their power to detect the weakness and fraud of the Christian doctrine, it must be these men; and therefore when they give such a public witness to the truth of religion, it comes after a fair trial. They turned from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, even Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come. These Ephesians are brought to "comprehend with all saints, what is the height, and length, and breadth, and depth, and to know the love of Christ that passes knowledge, and be filled with all the fulness of God," Eph. iii. 18, 19.

4. This is a mystery without controversy, because it still continues to be a mystery after all the ways that men have taken to explain it. Our faith is often beguiled by philosophy and vain deceit, after the rudiments of the world, and the commandments of men, and not after Christ. We are in danger of being spoiled with it. There has been many an insult upon Revelation from the fancies of men, but God has usually blasted them. They have set their threshold by his thresholds, and their posts by his posts. They have cast the doctrine of religion into barbarous moulds. From whence have we had our wars and fightings, but from the lusts of the mind as well as those of the flesh? "The wisdom that is from above, is first pure, then peaceable." The wisdom of the schools is neither; first, it is muddy, earthly, and polluted, and then it is fierce and quarrelsome.

What a bandage of hard words have they given to the doctrine of justification, till they have almost distinguished it out of the Church? And after all their laborious niceties, it will never be better understood than by God's own account of it; that he has set forth him to be a propitiation for our sins, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness in the remission of sins that are past, that God may be just,

* [At the lowest computation, about eight thousand dollars; but some suppose the amount to have been nearly four times that sum.]

and the justifier of him that believes in Jesus," Rom. iii. 25, 26. There is more in one breath and sentence of the Bible, than in all the voluminous disputations that have raised such a dust in the world. That he died, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, 1 Pet. iii. 18; that the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all, Isa. liii. 6; that the Messiah was cut off, but not for himself, Dan. ix. 26; that he bare the sins of many, Isa. liii. 12; that God has in Christ Jesus reconciled us to himself, not imputing our trespasses to us, but made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him, 2 Cor. v. 19. 21; these are as plain as language can make the thing. The difficulty here lies, not in the words, but in the doctrine itself; and that, being the counsel of God, must be mysterious. We can never by searching find it out to perfection. But I am sure the way to bring it down to our conceptions is, not to strip it of the phrase that God has given it, and clothe it with our own. It is never the plainer for any of those little arts. And we find by the "vain jangling" to which some turn aside, that they "neither understand what they say, nor whereof they affirm."

The attempt to explain a mystery must be quite wrong. It is best to keep it in its own language, and not utter words hard to be understood. It is at least a daring practice; not treating it as a mystery, but throwing it into a rumble of sounds. For these reasons, I could wish that saying had not obtained among divines, that "the Father is the fountain of the Deity." This is a nicety that we have nothing in Scripture to lead us into. It is being wise above what is written, and exercising ourselves in things too high for us. All the pains that men have taken to make these doctrines intelligible to reason, which is indeed to degrade them from their mystery, we see are vain. For still, without controversy great is the mystery of godliness. I have no more to do from this part of my subject, than to give you a few prac-

tical directions about the use that should be made of mysteries in religion.

1. If you would treat Christianity, or any particular article as a mystery, be careful to separate the doctrine from all the mixtures that curiosity or superstition has brought into it. Ministers should not come to you with excellency of speech or knowledge, in declaring to you the gospel of God. It is certain that these matters could never be known, if the Spirit who searches all things had not revealed them. Our faith stands, "not in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God."

2. Read the Scriptures diligently, "comparing spiritual things with spiritual." Be able to know what phrases are used there, and what are of foreign extraction. Where there is an awful darkness in one text, endeavour to see the way into it by the clearer light of another. Observe the great design of Scripture, for which God has put that book into your hands; and take the general scope of it along with you. It is lamentable to see with what fury persons can push their opinions, who are not able to bring one verse of the Bible into their argument.

That there are difficulties in these lively oracles, is what we are not ashamed to own. As they come from a God who only has immortality, and dwells in that light to which no man can approach; as they consist of matters that relate to an unseen world; it is no wonder that the unstable and ignorant wrest them to their own destruction, aad that the best believers are filled with a holy admiration. But I am far from thinking, that the design of revealing these things which are so "hard to be understood," is, that we may have a dependence upon our teachers, and receive all that they will please to give us. The learning of ministers is one of those means that God has blessed to the enlightening of the world; a skill in the original languages, and an acquaintance with eastern customs, are mighty helps to find out the sense of many passages. But it is plain that the Book

is designed for all people. In the days of the Son of Man, it is promised, that there shall be a way of holiness so easy, that the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein, Isa. xxxv. 8. The entrance of God's word gives a light that makes wise the simple. There is no necessity for all persons to know the critical meaning of every text. They may desire the sincere milk of the word, and grow thereby; they may see enough for their edification and comfort, though they are still unacquainted with many beauties in the phrase and argument. We know that the mere Bible itself, without any explanations, has been attended with a blessing. Thus it was at the Reformation; many ran to and fro with a few leaves of the Book, and so knowledge was increased. Therefore, "let the word of God dwell in you richly." It is thus that ministers are made perfect, thoroughly furnished to every good work.

3. Attend on the ordinances of the gospel. "He that walks with wise men, shall be wise." This method God has blessed for the opening of our eyes, and turning us from darkness to light. I am no way surprised at the "strong delusions" that obtain among us; we see them in men that receive not the love of the truth. How should they possibly be in the right, who throw off all worship, are aliens to the commonwealth of Israel, and live as without God in the world? The apostle observes, "He that is of God hears us, he that is not of God hears not us; hereby know we the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error." 1 John iv. 6. Thus in all ages were believers built up in their most holy faith.

Though you are not to trust any ministers by an implicit faith, yet this liberty is no argument against the ordinances of the gospel. We are to use our liberty as the servants of God. It is observed of the Bereans, whose evangelical *nobility* can never be too much remembered and admired, that they received the word with all readiness of mind, though they searched the Scriptures daily whether the things were so or not. Acts xvii. 11. When our blessed Saviour

received gifts for men, among the rest, he gave them pastors and teachers; and this was "for the work of the ministry, for the perfecting of the saints, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come, in the unity of the faith, to the knowledge of the Son of God; that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive." Eph. iv. 11—14. We see by experience, that the humble Christian who waits at Wisdom's gates visibly advances; there is in him a discernible increase of grace, and of the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. And, on the other hand, the brighter parts and greater learning of people, either deaden into dulness, or sour into error, when they neglect the means of improving them. "He that has, to him shall be given, and from him that has not, shall be taken away even that which he hath." The light that is in him shall be darkness, and then, "how great is that darkness?" If, therefore, you would hold fast the profession of your faith without wavering, forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is, but consider one another, to provoke unto love and good works; Heb. x. 23. 25; that ye may abound in wisdom, and increase more and more.

4. Pray for the Spirit. Though this is the greatest gift, yet you may ask it with the greatest hope. For "if ye being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" Desire that by his light you may be conducted into the true sense of Scripture, and the real benefit of ordinances; that when you read the word of God, you may see the wondrous things contained in his law; and when you come into the assemblies of his people, you may walk in the light of the Lord. We have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things. 1 Cor. ii. 12; 1 John ii. 10.

In order to this, take care that you do not grieve the Spirit. This requires the utmost guard over your tempers. "Laying aside all malice and guile, and hypocrisy and evil speaking, receive the sincere milk of the word." An angry furious man is out of the way of truth and peace, because he is doing violence to him whose office it is to lead us into the way of all truth. "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. Wherefore, lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and with meekness receive the ingrafted word, which is able to save your souls," Jam. i. 19—21. We are bid to speak the truth in love, not only as it is the best way of convincing others, but of nourishing ourselves; for thus we grow up unto him in all things, who is the head, even Christ Jesus. A person who indulges himself in ungodly passions holds the truth in unrighteousness: he stops the circulation in the mystical body; he will be a withered branch; he does not derive sap enough from Christ Jesus; his soul cannot thrive in the courts of the Lord. He is like a thistle by the sides of a vine, that may be said to defend it, but draws no manner of virtue from it. Believe, therefore, that nothing but the Scripture is the rule, and none but the Holy Spirit is a sufficient teacher, and that it is your utmost concern, not to forfeit and grieve away all the instruction that you stand in need of. "The meek will he guide in judgment, the meek will he teach his way." You must buy of Christ gold tried in the fire, and anoint your eyes with his eye-salve, that you may see.

5. Take care of quarrelling about these mysteries, and becoming vain in your imaginations. The doctrines of the Christian religion were never given us to furnish a campaign. But "the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace, of them that make peace." They are not only of a sublime but a useful nature. As, for example, it is a very little matter to be trained up in the best way of conceiving and delivering the doc-

trine of justification; to do it without the fraud of heretics, and the trash of schoolmen. This will be of no consequence to one who is yet in his sins, and has the wrath of God abiding on him. It is more my business to *have* the privilege, than barely to know the truth, that I may have strong consolation in fleeing for refuge to the hope that is set before me. It was a great thing that our Saviour said of the publican, that he went down to his house justified. Carrying the mercy of justification along with us, is more than carrying away the doctrine. The main thing is to have it go with us to our houses. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputes not iniquity," Psal. xxxii. 1, 2. God has revealed to us the way of salvation by Jesus Christ, not to set us a quarrelling about the manner of declaring it, but that we may "win Christ, and be found in him, not having on our own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is by the faith of the Son of God, Phil. iii. 8, 9.

6. Be more concerned about the improving of a mystery than the explaining of it. Inquire respecting an article of revelation, not only, what is there for me to *know*, but what is there for me to *do?* Receive the love of the truth, that you may be saved. What a poor business would it have been for Noah's sons to fall to disputing about the shape and convenience of the ark, when the waters were rolling after them? Their concern was to get into it, and so to be saved. This practical way of regarding a truth, is the means of giving you a greater knowledge. As our Saviour observes, "if any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself," John vii. 17. If what God has revealed to you about his nature is mysterious, let it employ your adoration. "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! Who has known the mind of the Lord, and who has been his counsellor? For of him, and to

him, and through him are all things; to whom be glory for ever and ever," Rom. xi. 33—36.

CHAPTER III.

THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION HAS A TENDENCY TO GODLINESS.

THE first general character of the Christian religion was, that it is the *pillar and ground of truth*, what the faith of mankind may rely upon with confidence. The second is like to it, that it is *a mystery*, to employ all our affections of delight and wonder. And now lest any people should think they are only to be confused with airy speculations, we are told, in the third place, that it reaches the *practice*, and fills our duty as well as our thoughts. It is to make us wiser and better, and hence it is called the "mystery of *godliness;*" which takes into it these three things:

1. It agrees to the main design of godliness;
2. It has a tendency to promote it;
3. It has the best influence upon it. And in each of these particulars, it is distinguished from those mysteries that are not of divine original; such as wicked men have contrived, and foolish ones believed. Their "coming is after the working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in those that perish;" upon whom God has sent "strong delusion that they should believe a lie," 2 Thes. ii. 9—11.

1. There is nothing in the mysteries of religion inconsistent with holiness to God, and beneficence to men. They are not contrived to take people off from their duty, to make them vain in themselves, and useless to others. There is not one principle of piety or charity that suffers by them. They do not break in upon any law of liberty. And this is more than can be said of the lying wonders that some have obtruded upon us.

In this comparison I will not lead you very far abroad, but give you a view of the Christian religion and those mysteries that are in it, as they appear to be of quite another nature from the inventions of men. The opposite instance that I shall bring, is the doctrine of *transubstantiation.* I have frequently heard and read that boast of the papists, that there is as good an argument for this, as there is for the *Trinity;* and that no objection can lie against the one, which may not with as much force be applied against the other. This I think may be easily dissolved, if it was not out of the way of my subject. I could show you, that there is a great difference between establishing a doctrine by the decrees of men, and receiving it upon the plain grounds of a revelation; and that it is much easier to find a similitude or a metaphor in that saying, "This is my body," than it can be in the other, "These three are one;" and that in a case which is plainly within the reach of my senses, I may safely use them; but when the matter is confessedly above them, I ought to believe without them; because this is what no man either has seen or can see.

I will therefore run the comparison between the two doctrines, upon the head of their consistence with practical religion. It is easy to see how much the peace and purity of my life are promoted by a belief of this, that "there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and that these three are one," 1 John v. 7, that "God was manifest in the flesh, and justified in the Spirit." The divinity of a Saviour is a mighty argument for the dependence of my soul upon him. It is from this, that I can trust in his merit, and be always looking at his intercession; because, as he continues for ever, he has an unchangeable priesthood. On this account we perform our duty to him with the rest of his people, "calling on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours." We are "under the law to Christ." If he was not God, I would not honour the Son as I honour the Father, nor as I be-

lieve in God, so believe in him, John v. 23.—xiv. 1. There could be no peace of conscience without a sense of pardon and the hopes of a protection. Now "He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them," Heb. vii. 25. And the same happy conclusions may be argued from the Divinity of the Holy Spirit. He that creates us anew in Christ Jesus, he that comforts us in all our tribulations, he that helps our infirmities in prayer, he that guides us into the land of uprightness, can be no less than a God, Eph. ii. 10; 2 Cor. i. 4; Rom. viii. 26; Psal. cxliii. 10. In these cases we are said to be "all taught of God." If that is his title, I cannot overdo it in my expectations from him. He is able to make all grace abound towards me. I believe a victory over my corruptions, as well as a pardon for them; that though all my pains cannot destroy the seeds of pride, and passion, and worldly mindedness, yet "the Lord is that Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. We are changed from glory to glory as by the Spirit of the Lord," 2 Cor. iii. 17, 18.

But now, what is there of this in the doctrine of transubstantiation? What am I better for it, either in my hope or practice? Do not we plainly see that it eats out all religion? There is more adoration paid to the consecrated wafer than there is to any thing else; bowing before it, looking upon it, giving it the deepest homage. Now, this is more than is owing even to the body of Christ Jesus himself. *That* was never the object of a religious reverence, being no other than a creature. So that, though the words of the New Testament were to be taken in the popish sense, they would not put us upon any act of adoration. The declaration, "this is my body," is no argument for me to fall down before it, unless he had said, This is my Divinity; here I am as a God. The calling it his *body*, expresses no more than the human nature. And, therefore, if it is possible to change the bread into that, yet it is idolatry to bow down before it. So that this mystery of theirs, strikes at the root

of all practical religion, by giving divine worship to that which is not God. And the consequence of this is the drawing off their thoughts, their joy, their dependence, from the infinite nature, where alone they ought to be fixed. It is said of the *man* Christ Jesus, that "by him we believe in God," that "he offered himself to God." But this practice is in them, as well as the heathen, a "worshipping and serving the creature more than the Creator, who is over all God, blessed for evermore." He tells us in the second commandment, that he is a "jealous God;" and it is upon this very consideration that the apostle argues against all human fancies at the Lord's table. "Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy, are we stronger than he?" 1 Cor. x. 21, 22. Shall we even there prostrate ourselves to any but the Most High? Shall we make an idol of the greatest blessing that he has given us; and defraud him of the honour that is due to himself alone, for the sake of that lower nature that he was pleased to take upon him? Thus you see how the belief of this doctrine, and the whole practice of their church, are inconsistent with that principle that lies at the heart of all religion, that God alone is to be worshipped.

2. The doctrines of Christianity have a tendency to promote all godliness. They are given upon that very design. In another place it is called "the doctrine according to godliness," that is, framed by the same model with it. These things are revealed on purpose to turn our feet into the way of peace, to give light unto them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death. Nay, besides the homage that must be paid to God, we have a mysterious religion that makes us useful in the world. You see upon what view life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel. He there lays down the original principle of revelation, that "the kindness, and love of God our Saviour towards man appeared, not by works of righteousness that we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost,

which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life," Tit. iii. 4—7. And what is all this for? Only to throw us into a method of individual piety? No; but to make us of service to others. "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they who have believed in God, might be careful to maintain good works; these things are good and profitable unto men." The reason he gives, in the next words, why we are to "avoid foolish questions and genealogies, and strivings about the law," is, because they are unprofitable and vain." They do no manner of good.

This may be truly affirmed of transubstantiation; it is a *useless* mystery, as much against "peace upon earth," as it is against "glory to God in the highest." It shows no "good will towards men," but is plainly a "cloak of covetousness," for a priest first to lead you into the dark, and then to rob you. It "changes the glory of the incorruptible God, into an image made like to corruptible man." The manner of pressing it, is, like itself, unchristian, "earthly, sensual, and devilish." They do not recommend it as they would "the wisdom that descends from above;" for that being "first pure," it would be also "peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits." Whereas, there never was, that I can hear, any common temper shown in the service that is paid to this pretended body of Christ. They "speak perverse things about it; human decrees have established it upon human penalties; it is safer contradicting any article of religion than that. Inquisitions, that carry in their bowels all the varieties of cruelty, are a trench set about this doctrine.

If they would dispute about the body of Jesus, as Michael the archangel did "about the body of Moses," they must bring no "railing accusation;" but they use worse language to their brethren, than he did to the devil. It is very different from the methods of the gospel, when objections are answer-

ed by racks and fires. Nay, where the laws have restrained them from these severities, there cannot be a procession of the Host, without a church mob, insulting all those that do not come into their idolatry. And what a confused assembly must that be, that are zealous both in adoration and violence; that is equally a house of prayer, and a den of thieves? One party falling down themselves, and another party knocking down others; and this is the greatest solemnity of their worship! As if a more extraordinary devotion could not be carried on, but in this jumbled way, by the superstition of their bigots, and the insolence of their bullies. Their procession in celebrating his death, is not unlike that of the Jews in contriving it. "Judas one of the twelve came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people." Such offerings as these are fitter for Moloch than for Jesus. The former indeed allowed all this, but of the latter it is observed, that his carriage was the reverse of these riotous devotions, for he did "not strive, nor cry, nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets." And he will be served in his own way. The apostle gave a very different account of himself from what these sons of violence can pretend to, "they found me purified in the temple, neither with multitude nor with tumult." These confusions are the fruits of that vile doctrine, and by their fruits we are to know them.

3. The mysteries of religion have not only a tendency to promote godliness, but they give the best influence to it. It never prospers so well as under the impressions of this faith. "It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." Morality without revelation, is starved and withered; it wants either more vigour or more comfort. But "they that are planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of our God." Here I shall endeavour to do these two things:

1. Give you some account of this godliness; and,

2. Show you how the mysteries of religion have a happy influence upon it.

(1.) What is the godliness here mentioned? This inquiry will give us an argument for those doctrines that promote it. If we find, that the practice they put us upon is the most useful to ourselves and others, we shall the more esteem them. I take the word εὐσεβεια to be of great extent, and to include the whole of our duty, though it has the nearest relation to what lies between us and God. In particular, it signifies our worship of him, our likeness to him, our communion with him, our expectations from him, our regard to his institutions, our love to his people, and our usefulness to his creatures. These are so many beauties of holiness, and ornaments of practice. "He that in these things serveth Christ, is acceptable to God, and approved of men." And you will find they sink and die when we abate of our relish for the mysteries of religion. No sort of people are so grossly deficient in their morals, as they that despise the doctrines of Christianity.

1. One article of godliness, and indeed the chief of them is, that we should bow down, and worship, before the Lord our Maker. When God looked from heaven, "to see if there were any that did understand and seek him," the report was, "they are all together become filthy, there is none that doeth good; who eat up my people as they eat bread, and call not on the Lord." Psal. xiv. 2, 3. It is the unhappiness of the heathen world, that they are "alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them." Or, if they know God, they glorify him not as God, but become vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart is darkened. Our Saviour tells the Samaritans, that they worshipped they know not what. But the most lamentable account is that which the apostle gives, that these people are "without Christ, aliens to the commonwealth of Israel, strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world;" Eph. ii. 12; paying no respect to him who was their Author and will be

their Judge; never feeling after him, if haply they might find him; but acting as if they carried brutal souls in human bodies.

The first thing that the grace of God does, is, to bring us to our knees. "Men and brethren, what shall we do to be saved?" was the cry of those who a little before were hardened against all salvation, and had the utmost contempt of the means that God appointed for it. The jailer, whose conscience was covered with a callousness from his calling, comes trembling with the same question. It is observed of Saul, that he quickly fell to this work; "Behold he prays." It may be, they who led him by the hand to Damascus, knew not what he was doing; they only beheld him a miserable object, a moving spectacle that could not lie down, and durst not eat for three days and three nights; but in this heavy darkness he found his way to the throne of grace. His desires were feeding and fetching from above, though he made such a sad figure to those about him.

This is godliness: "If ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons, judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear," as those that are "born again not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible." 1 Pet. i. 17. 23. This is the great business of religion, to "seek the Lord whilst he may be found, and call upon him whilst he is near." There is no piety without this. Let not any deceive themselves; religion does not consist so much in talking *of* God, as in talking *to* him. "With my soul have I desired thee in the night," saith the prophet, "and with my spirit within me I will seek thee early." "The way of the just is uprightness;" that is, his habit, his choice, his course, his inclination; and "thou most upright, dost weigh the path of the just;" it is under thy notice, and it is directed to thy throne. Isa. xxvi. 7. 9. There are all manner of considerations that should move us to this; the debt we owe to a Creator, the necessity that is upon us from the daily deficiencies of life, and more espe-

cially the interests of immortality in another world, which can be pursued in no better a way. All these the grace of God sets home. Those people may be supposed to "cast off fear," who "restrain prayer before God." It is this duty that the principles of the Christian doctrine are to promote.

2. Our likeness to God. Godliness is God's likeness. This may be considered both as the cause and the effect of the other. Our conformity to him makes us serve him, for "how shall two walk together except they be agreed?" and our service makes us more like him. We see through a glass, and are changed into the same image, from glory to glory. It is the command that he has laid down, "Be ye holy, for I am holy." And he "that has this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure."

The best incentive to this, comes from the principles of the Christian doctrine. The clearest view that we can have of the divine perfections, is from a *God manifest in the flesh.* "No man has seen the Father at any time, but the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has revealed him." John i. 18. In him we see "the image of the invisible God." Col. i. 15.

This is a true and noble notion of religion, that it is a conformity to him that made us. We are his workmanship, created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works. We put on the new man, in the image of him that created us. Some sort of people are fond of being called gods. They would gladly suppose themselves to have his power; but it would be more their interest to imitate his purity and goodness. Supremacy and infallibility are not what he has imparted to any. "Great is our Lord and of great power, his understanding is infinite." Psal. cxlvii. 5. *These* we are not to learn of him; but he has proposed his other attributes to our esteem and practice, to be gracious, holy, just, and true. It is only in this sense, that we are to be "perfect, as our heavenly Father is perfect."

3. Godliness consists in a communion with God;

which is the exchange of *love*, between him and us. Cant. viii. 7. We delight ourselves in his great goodness; and the satisfaction we receive from his love as a bounty, is returned to him as an offering. On his part, this is promoted by enlivening our graces, pouring afresh into our comforts, and drawing us out after himself. On our part, it is pursued in desires towards him; admirations of him, for the glory of his nature, the lowness of his condescension; for what he is, and what he does. It sometimes rises into joyful assurances that he is ours and we are his; and these are still more powerful as the soul flies up with them into a better world, where we are not only to have a glory from Christ, but a glory with him.

This satisfaction may well be called religion, because it comes no other way. These are joys that no stranger intermeddles with. If our joys are separated from a life of holiness, humility, and peace, they are false and counterfeit. An angry passionate favourite is a contradiction. God indulges no pettish children in his family; though he may not cast them out of the house, yet he carries it with a coldness to them. I have known some Christians very courageous in dangers, and very liberal in charities, who have scarce enjoyed a common peace within, because of a sour and morose temper. The apostle saith, "Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profits me nothing." God usually deals with his own children as they do with others. "With the merciful thou wilt show thyself merciful, and with the froward thou wilt show thyself froward." Nothing more grieves the Spirit of God than the rising of an inward passion. If you would be sealed to the day of redemption, you must put away clamour, and malice, and anger, and evil speaking. This is religion, and it is a delightful part of it, to seek the Lord and his strength, to seek his face evermore, that your heart may live for ever, Psal. cv. 4. It is good, saith David, for me to draw nigh unto God. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth

shall praise him with joyful lips, Psal. lxxiii. 28; lxii. 5.

4. This same godliness takes into it our expectation from God. "We are saved by hope, but hope that is seen is not hope, for what a man sees, why does he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it," Rom. viii. 24, 25. Most of our dealings with God are about things to come. We desire he would give us our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, and not suffer us to be led into temptation; but in all this we are "looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ," Tit. ii. 13. When our hearts are directed into the love of God, it is also into a "patient waiting for Christ," 2 Thess. iii. 5. We have not yet received our portion. He that has put us among the children will give us a delightful heritage. "We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened." And it will be thus with us, till we are "clothed upon with our house that is from heaven." "We walk by faith and not by sight;" and therefore "whilst we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord." We are waiting to "see the King in his beauty," and be brought into the land that is now afar off.

There is, and perhaps there always will be, some dread of death. The breaking down of this tabernacle is an act of violence. Sickness has an awful way of pulling out the pins, and taking the frame to pieces. We ought to use all means for lengthening of life. It is not only the voice of nature but of religion. For which reason I cannot but think that a late author, in his Ecclesiastical History, has misrepresented the primitive Christians about their zeal in pushing on martyrdom; that was no business of theirs. We have but two examples in the Bible of good men desiring to die rather than live, and each of them is blamed for it.

Nevertheless, as the living know that they shall die, so there can be no religion that does not keep up a trade with another world. "Our conversation is in heaven." "We are waiting for the grace that shall

be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ." We look for his second appearance. Our eyes are taken off from things that are seen, which are but temporal, and fixed upon those "that are not seen, which are eternal."

5. Godliness takes into it our regard to the Divine institutions. We must "call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, and honourable." People may abound with arguments against the obligation of the command, and strive to bend their judgment to their practice; but the grace of God teaches us to look upon it as an "accepted time," and "a day of salvation." There is no worship of God, but in the way that he has appointed. We are to "continue" not only "in the apostles' doctrine, but "in their fellowship, in breaking of bread and in prayers." Therefore that person gives himself a liberty of using "vain words," who talks of Christianity, and yet can turn away his ear from hearing the law, finding his pleasure on God's holy day. They that are above ordinances, are above grace. The generation of seekers inquire where God may be found. He has been known in the breaking of bread, and manifested the good favour of his knowledge by preaching. And upon this practice the mysteries of religion have a powerful influence.

6. Godliness takes into it our love to godly people. There must be a social religion; not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, but considering one another to provoke unto love and good works, and so much the more as you see the day approaching. The temper that teaches supercilious language, "stand by thyself, for I am holier than thou," is so far from being right, that it gives God the quickest offence. These are a smoke in his nose, and a fire that burns all the day. The grace of God gives us a similitude both to him that made us, and to those who have obtained the like precious faith with us. All the whims of popery that separate people from the conversation of the world, and throw them into a morose retirement, are as unchristian as they are

inhuman. And therefore we ought to abhor them as ways of making us useless, or at the best, like Israel, an empty vine that brought forth fruit to itself.

7. Our usefulness to those who are yet without, is no small part of religion. To this we have the example of our gracious God, who causes his sun to shine upon the just and the unjust. As he was mindful of us in our low estate, so should we be of others. When we were without strength, and yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly. He received gifts, even for the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell among them. As you have been as bad as they, how do you know but they may in time be as good as you? and if it is not so, there must be the utmost care to preserve the ways of God in full reputation, that they may have no evil thing to say of you. This is Godliness, pure religion and undefiled before God and our Father, to visit the fatherless and the widow, and to keep yourselves unspotted from the world. A good man is a useful one. The sons of God are blameless and harmless, without rebuke, in the midst of a corrupt and perverse generation, among whom they shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life.

(2.) We shall now inquire how this Godliness, as it comprehends our duty to God and our beneficence to man, is promoted by the mysteries of religion. How do these things fill us with reverence and a godly fear; and teach us to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God? I might consider the two branches of holiness apart, and let you see that they are both of them much improved by the doctrines of the gospel; that the grace of God which brings salvation, teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly as to ourselves, righteously as to our neighbour, and godly in the acts of devotion; and that these beauties of practice are all maintained and heightened by our "looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for

us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works," Tit. ii. 11—14.

But I shall not consider these things asunder. I will only give you a few particulars, in which you will see, there could be no approach to God, and no true service to men, if our religion was not as mysterious as infinite wisdom has appointed it; that is, if God was not "manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, believed on in the world, and received up into glory." It is only by this that we know of a way opened to the throne of grace. It is thus that we are filled with a reverence for the Divine majesty; by this means he creates the principle of *our* love, which is no other than a return of gratitude to *his*. We find by experience that this makes the worship of God our delight and pleasure. In this we have the greatest examples of our duty, are most inspired with hope, filled with charity to those with whom we differ, and a true value for those with whom we agree. Thus it appears that Christianity is a mystery of *Godliness;* that it forms and adorns the practice of those that believe it. There are none of its doctrines which do not infuse into these rules, that life that makes them more powerful and pleasant.

1. Were it not for these mysteries, we could not have had an open way to the throne of grace. Faith is the evidence of things not seen, and yet without this faith, which supposes a revelation, it is impossible to please God. It seems to be the universal language of our nature, that "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God," Rom. iii. 23. We cannot but fear that he is a God of truth and without iniquity. These are the eternal glories of his nature, without which he could not be the object of our reverence, and sinners cannot think of them without a dread. "In thy sight shall no man living be justified." This ever was, and ever will be, the painful query of an awakened conscience, "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God?" For this some people will stick at no expense or

cruelty. "Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, and ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" Mic. vi. 6, 7. In these sorrowful confusions must they have wandered to the end of the world, if God had not revealed his love, and showed them better ways of approach than ever they could have thought of; according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him, Eph. iii. 11, 12.

We could not come to God as Adam did, who had two things to recommend him, the purity of his nature, and the perfection of his obedience. "We are all as an unclean thing, and our righteousnesses as filthy rags." Our persons are vile, and our actions provoking. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one." The angels who were our companions in paradise became the terrible guards of the place, and enemies to the old inhabitants. There was no getting by that flaming sword that turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life. And therefore, as all the former passages were blocked up, God is said to "consecrate a new and a living way through the vail, that is, the flesh" of Christ, Heb. x. 20. To this he has given a consecration; he has made it *holy*. Our inventions at the best were uncertainties; whether they would do or no, we could not tell; but upon this way he has put a royal stamp. It is what his own holiness has opened. Then it is a "new way," as distinguished from that which our iniquity had closed up. And lastly, it is "a living way," as it gives life to those that come into it, and as it endures for ever.

Now all this is brought about by the first branch of the mystery of Godliness, "God was manifest in the flesh." Without that we must for ever have continued in the state of our first parents, driven out from God, from the habitation of his holiness, from a concern with his love, and any further expectations of his bounty. Nay, our case would have been the

same with that of devils. They are better at contriving ways of return to God, than we can pretend to, and yet it is past all their cunning to find out any door of hope. But having left their habitations once, they have left them for ever, and are "reserved in everlasting chains under darkness to the judgment of the great day."

The reason why it is not with us as it is with them, must be all resolved into those things that we call the mystery of religion; that "God has sent forth his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh;" that he is "the way, the truth and the life." "No man comes to the Father but by him." "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand." He has joined the two main principles of natural and revealed religion together, that "there is but one God, and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus," 1 Tim. ii. 5. Without this there must have been an eternal bar in our way; for God hears not sinners; he is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, or look on them that do evil. And what does this conclude for us, but that we have no hope, and must live as without God in the world. Had it not been for our high-priest, who is gone by his own blood into the holy place, we could not have come with boldness to his mercy seat, in hopes of obtaining mercy and finding grace to help in every time of need, Heb. iv. 16.

2. Another principle of Godliness which the mysteries of religion improve, is a reverence of the Divine Majesty. I need not stay to argue the necessity of approaching in this manner to infinite perfection. "Great fear is due unto the Lord in the assembly of his saints, and he is to be had in reverence of all that are about him." But my particular aim under this head, is to show you, that the revelation he makes of himself in the gospel, gives the most useful impressions upon every man's conscience. If thou shouldst mark iniquity, who could stand? But

there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayst be feared: who is a strong Lord like unto thee, and to thy faithfulness round about thee! We have obtained a kingdom that cannot be moved, and therefore have grace to serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear. The promises that we have received, engage us to perfect holiness in the fear of God, Ps. cxxx. 3, 4; lxxxix. 8; Heb. xii. 28; 2 Cor. vii. 1.

He never makes such an awful appearance as in the scheme of redemption. They that sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb, say, "great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are all thy ways, thou King of saints; who shall not fear thee and glorify thy name! His riding upon the clouds, and having his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, is not so much as his dwelling between the cherubims. He is terrible out of his holy places, from whence he gives strength and power to his people. When he rules the raging of the sea, and stills the waves thereof; when he broke Rahab in pieces as one that is slain, and scattered his enemies with a strong arm, they were mighty things; but the justice and judgment by which our redemption is brought about, are the habitation of his throne, the attributes that dwell in his glory; mercy and truth shall go before his face, Ps. lxviii. 35; lxxxix. 9, 10. When it is said of our Lord, that "men shall be blessed in him, and all nations shall call him blessed," the pious remark upon it is, "blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doth wondrous things, Psal. lxxii. 17, 18. We find in fact that no people are so touched with a sense of his majesty as they who have been inquiring after a share in his love.

The dread that mankind are struck into by the noise of storms and thunder, deserves not the name of devotion. "They that dwell in the uttermost parts are afraid of his tokens," but this does not lead them to worship. No person does rightly believe that "God is," but one that believes "he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him." We cannot suppose that Isaiah was unacquainted with those arguments

that are fetched out of nature in proof of the Divine perfections, and the duty we owe to them; and yet he is moved by a vision of another sort. He "saw the Lord upon a throne high and lifted up," Isa. vi. 1. If an evangelist may be the interpreter of a prophet, the Lord whom he saw was the Lord Redeemer, for "those things said Esaias when he saw his glory, and spake of him," John xii. 41. "His train filled the temple," which shows that he came to restore the worship of God, to establish a correspondence between heaven and earth. In this design he was seen of angels; he is adored by them in the higher apartments of his house. Above it, i. e. above his throne, stood the seraphims; each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. One cried to another, or, as the Hebrew word is, this cried to this, they handed the adoration round, put it into an eternal circle, saying, holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory. Nay the very unfeeling parts of nature receive the impression of this greatness, "the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke," Isa. vi. 2, 3.

This was a happy vision to the prophet, because thence he concluded, that the purpose of redemption held good; that here was a sufficient attendance of angels, and the display of a God to make it effectual. But instead of talking over those joys that he is supposed to feel, he looks upon it as the most awful appearance of divinity. He is presently filled with a sense of his vanity and wickedness; of every distance between him and a God so great and so holy. "Then said I, Wo is me, for I am undone." What! does he think himself undone by the visions of grace and mercy? No! I do not take that to be the cry of despair; but this was such a representation of God in his power and his purity, as he had never met with before. "I am of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the king, the Lord of hosts." Had he never seen

him before, in his works of nature and providence? Was this the first time that he thought him to be the Lord of hosts, Lord of the armies in heaven, and the inhabitants of the earth? No! but the divine majesty was never so opened to him as in the disclosure of a Redeemer.

We need look no further than our daily observation for a proof of this. The fear of God, and a faith in Jesus, go together. We walk before him in holiness and righteousness, under the knowledge of salvation that he has given to his people, in the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God, Luke i. 75. 77. How is the Deity treated by those that despise revelation? How grossly deficient are they in their homage to him, who are more ready to blaspheme his name, to neglect his ordinances, and lay aside even that practice which all nature has confessed to be his due? On the other hand, how does a knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus affect those that have it? In what manner do they think and speak of God? Is it with the freedom and presumption that are charged upon their principles? Are they too familiar with him? No; it is plain they dare not do what they are accused of, but "tremble at his word." And thus you see, that the reverence, without which there can be no acceptable worship, is promoted by the mysteries of our religion.

3. It is in the belief of these doctrines that we feel the principles of our love to God, which are but the rebound of his to us. "We love him because he first loved us," 1 John iv. 19. This we see in the mystery of redemption. Had he pardoned us without any satisfaction, it would not only have wronged his justice, but obscured his mercy. Had there been a remission of sins without shedding of blood, we must have admired his goodness at a lower rate than we do now. For herein has God commended his love towards us, in that whilst we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent forth his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through

him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins, Rom. v. 8; 1 John iv. 9, 10. The very price of our redemption, as well as the thing itself, is an argument of the Divine goodness. That he should furnish out all the expense of his own satisfaction, that he himself should find out a ransom, is a great deal more kind than if he had broken in upon his justice, and given us our happiness without any regard to that at all. We value the love that bestows a salvation, not merely by what the thing is, but by what it cost, "the precious blood of the Son of God, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot," 1 Pet. i. 19.

Now, the more we see God's love, the more do we feel our own. And this must ever be the noblest principle of all duty. What we do from love, looks like a heavenly action. When we are *constrained* with this, it makes obedience easy and delightful. It rushes through every impediment of nature and temptation; it sets us above the world whilst we are in it; and for this we could have no such argument as we are now possessed of, were it not for the revelation that is given us in the gospel. Here we are led to design, to venture, to pursue all for God, who has left so much for us. I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ, and know him and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, Phil. iii. 8—10. From his dying for us, we are willing to be crucified to the world, to all the offers that it makes, and all the diversions that it gives. This has been a principle of duty to the martyrs; in the force of that, they "accepted not of deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection." It was in view of what Christ had done and suffered, that they loved him so powerfully, "not loving their own lives unto the death."

4. We find by experience that this makes the worship of God our delight and pleasure. "Our hearts are knit together and comforted unto the riches of the

full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ," Col. ii. 2. The veil upon the Jews will be done away in Christ; and "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." It is owing to this, that in all devotion, "we behold with open face, the glory of the Lord;" the greatest manifestation that he is making of himself to a lost world. Hence it is that others have taken notice, that we have been with Jesus. We glory in his holy name, for the heart of them will rejoice that seek the Lord.

Mere bowing before him that made us, and begging his favour, is the duller part of a believer's work; a boldness to enter into the holiest of all, through the blood of Jesus, is his principle and his glory. He is introduced by one who is fairer than the sons of men. To him to live is Christ. His Saviour is not only the way to the Father, but altogether lovely, the chiefest among ten thousand. He draws us that we may run after him. The King brings us into his chambers, where we are glad in him. He is held in his galleries, he dwells in the gardens, and the companions hear his voice. We have tasted this Lord to be gracious, and come to him as a living stone, to have more of that experience. He was disallowed indeed of men, but he is chosen of God and precious. We should lose our relish of an ordinance, if the love and kindness of God our Saviour had not appeared. "We have thought of thy loving kindness, O God, in the midst of thy temple; according to thy name, O God, so is thy praise to the ends of the earth." We see by a daily observation, how the truth as it is in Jesus has a mighty influence. It makes us joyful in the house of prayer. His name is as ointment poured forth. His love we remember more than wine. Had he not been manifested in the flesh, and dwelt among us, we might have worshipped God, but could never have had any of that pleasure, that makes his yoke to be easy, and his burden light.

5. In this revelation we have the greatest and best examples of our duty. By the manifestation of God

in the flesh, we have the highest of all; the obedience of Christ "magnified the law and made it honourable." And besides that, it is easy to show, that without these doctrines we could not have had those noble patterns that God has given us in several ages. It was with a regard to these that they of old have done their duty, served their generation, and fallen asleep in peace. "Of this salvation the prophets inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto us; searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow; unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but to us they did minister the things that are now reported by them that have preached the gospel among us," 1 Peter i. 10—12. It is by this faith that the elders obtained a good report. We are thus compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses, who are well spoken of; God has testified of their gifts, they have obtained witness that they were righteous. In the belief of these things, the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow, they have "subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, and turned to flight the armies of the aliens."

This has in latter ages given people a courage in the field that no terror could daunt, and a faithfulness in council that no bribes could pervert. But what is there of those social virtues in those who deny the Lord that bought them? As they like not to retain God in their knowledge, he gives them over to a reprobate mind, being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful, Rom. i.

28—31. The apostle complains, that "all men love their own, not the things of Jesus Christ;" and by his way of judging you may conclude, that those people who hate and despise the things of Jesus Christ, do only love their own. They are for themselves entirely. As they serve not the Lord Jesus, they serve their own belly. The great men who knew not the way of the Lord, and the judgment of their God, have altogether broken the yoke, and burst the bonds, Jer. v. 4. It is only among believers that we find those who have lived with credit, and died with peace. As they did not make shipwreck of faith, they did not make shipwreck of a good conscience. They have borne down the temptations of honours, places, and rewards; "choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt; because they had respect to the recompense of reward, and endured as seeing him who is invisible," Heb. xi. 25—27.

6. By this they were inspired with hope. They went out of the world with no reluctance, from their being so indifferent to it. "They desired a better country, that is an heavenly." "They rejoiced in hope of the glory of God." And God distinguished them at their death. "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace." They did not die stupid or frighted, as they must have done, if they had paid no regard to the mysteries of religion. That which raised them above the fears of death, was their knowing in whom they believed, that he transacted that whole affair of redemption, and was therefore "able to keep what they had committed to him against that day." They looked forward to the day which is so often called "the day of Christ." They had put something into his hands, and had such apprehensions of his perfection, as to think he was able to keep it, that nothing entrusted with him should be lost.

And is it not good to follow such as these through

the cross turns of life, and at last through the valley of the shadow of death? Is it not very desirable to die as they did, who feared no ill, having God to be with them, his rod and his staff to comfort them? They had no reluctance in saying, "Lord Jesus receive my spirit." They looked unto him "as the author and finisher of faith." They knew that upon the belief that Jesus died and rose again, "those who sleep in Jesus will God bring with him;" and that made them look upon death as a passage by which they went to be "ever with the Lord."

7. This has given good people a principle of charity to those that differ from them, and the truest value for those with whom they are agreed. Speaking the truth in love, they grow up unto him in all things who is the Head even Christ, from whom the whole body fitly joined together increases to the edifying of itself in love," Eph. iv. 15, 16. As a mystery is above the comprehension of human reason, we can only receive it upon a divine testimony. "Flesh and blood has not revealed it, but our Father who is in heaven." This should give us a pity for others, who as yet are in darkness and see no light. It will keep us from the paths of the destroyer, and every thing that looks like penal authority. He that thinks to drive in the Christian religion by human laws, knows not what belongs to it.

If I should force a Mahometan, it would be scandalous to Christianity, because if ever he is convinced, it is owing to a light that we cannot give him. We must in "meekness instruct those that oppose themselves, if peradventure God will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth," 2 Tim. ii. 25. If "no man can say, that Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Ghost," 1 Cor. xii. 3; to punish a man for not saying so, is a reflection upon the Holy Ghost for not doing his office. As for men who subscribe articles that they never think of, and mean no more by orthodoxy than a title to preferment, it will be easy enough to them; though they are "destitute of the truth," they suppose that "gain is godliness."

And perhaps these will find no scruple to come into hard measures against those who differ from them. But he that does justice to the mystery of any doctrine will be of opinion, that as men cannot give faith, so men should not pretend to reward it. This teaches us to "love, not in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth; and hereby we shall know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him," 1 John iii. 18, 19.

If you please in our day to examine the different tempers with which revealed religion is maintained and opposed, you will find which of them is the wisdom that descends from above. There is among some people, a scorn of all those who give up their reason to a Divine instruction. They are treated as fools and blind, who take things upon trust, and are denied the title that every honest man ought to have, of being a *free thinker*. The belief of what God has told us, is spoken of with contempt; as if faith in him was the destruction of reason in ourselves. So it was of old. That which is called the Arian persecution, was one of the greatest the church of God ever felt. And I must freely declare my opinion, that all the late arguments for liberty are inconsistent with the language of reproach and insolence that come out of the same mouths. If people are not to be persecuted for saying there are no mysteries in religion, they ought not to be laughed at, and treated with scorn for saying there are. For "cruel mockings" are as really persecution as any thing in the world can be. The apostle calls it so, "He that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit," Gal. iv. 29. The case that he refers to is that of Ishmael, who was guilty of no more to Isaac than mocking him. I am sorry there is so much reason to fear, that if some had the power which they desire, though they have exclaimed so loudly against making a prison the place of heretics, they would think a madhouse a proper house for believers. The apostle could not give the Jews a worse name than that of *despisers*. But the mysteries of our religion are

according to godliness. When they are received in truth, they make a person humble in his own eyes, and that, I am sure, is the best ground of peace, for only by pride comes contention.

I will close with a short application.

1. If these are mysteries of godliness, then you see the true spring of the opposition that is made to them, not because they are above reason, but because they are against corruption, and "hide pride from man." One that walks humbly with his God cannot treat them with scorn. But because the practical part of the Bible bears hard upon flesh and blood, that it may no longer be a rule, sinners will not suffer it to be a revelation. "Men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil; for every one that doth evil hates the light, neither comes to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved," John iii. 19, 20. This is bringing religion lower than the heathen did. They that had not the law, i. e. a written one, were a law to themselves; they had the work of the law written in their hearts, Rom. ii. 15. These owned a God; they professed that he ought to be worshipped; they had their times of doing it, and such as they always accounted sacred. Swearing and living without devotion, were things condemned even by their light; divers lusts and pleasures, some sort of impurities, were "not so much as named among the Gentiles." Now, what is the reason that the Bible is so much in contempt, but because it has refined our practice, in giving us a "commandment that is holy, just, and good?" And that it may not have its weight they deny its mysteries. They believe not the truth, who have pleasure in unrighteousness, 2 Thess. ii. 12.

2. Let us improve the doctrines of religion to this purpose, to make us better as well as wiser. Ask yourselves upon the hearing of these mysteries, what will God have me to *do?* This is called adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things, Tit. ii. 10. By that means you will live down the reproach of men, and they who believe not the word, may without it "be won by your conversation." Let it be

seen, that these are mysteries of *godliness;* that your religion consists in "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." "He that in these things serves Christ, is accepted of God, and approved of men." And, besides, by this means you will come to have a better light. He that does his will, shall know the doctrine whether it be of God, John vii. 17. I should ever have a great value for that notion that leads a person to prayer, and keeps him always humble. What these doctrines are, I am in the next place to show you, as you find them distributed into six particulars. "God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, and received up into glory."

CHAPTER IV.

GOD WAS MANIFEST IN THE FLESH.

Our Apostle having said of the Christian religion, that it is *the pillar and ground of truth;* that it is a *mystery* containing the deep things of God; and that it is a mystery of *godliness,* to form the practice, and fill the mind; in the latter part of the verse, shows us, that this revelation is equal to the pompous account he has given us of it. It is "the glorious gospel of the blessed God." The particulars of this doctrine answer the general characters that he had given of them all. We may take the account that he lays down, under this division.

First, The person he speaks of is called GOD. This is the subject of the revelation. The Christian religion is a report of Him, who was "declared to be the Son of God with power," Rom. i. 4.

Secondly, We have the several discoveries that he made of himself, which are no fewer than six; he was "manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the gentiles, believed on in the

world, and received up into glory." Of these particulars you may observe two things.

1st. That they give us the several gradations of his power and love. One comes after another. They are so many stages of his appearance, comprehended in a history, that begins with his incarnation, and ends with his ascending up on high. This is what he delivered to the Corinthians (ἐν πρωτοις) among the first and chief things, "that Christ died for our sins, and that he was buried, and rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures," 2 Cor. xv. 3, 4.

2dly. That they all relate to the happiness of mankind, and the redemption that he came about. It was for his people, that he put on flesh, and put on glory, that he appeared on earth, that he returned to heaven, and went through all the intermediate parts of the history that are mentioned in this passage. "For their sakes he sanctified himself, that they might be sanctified through the truth," John xvii. 19. These are things that relate to us, the matter of our faith; the mystery that God has given for our entertainment and practice. That the holiness of his people may be carried on, he reveals what Christ has done, from the extreme of humiliation to that of reward. This doctrine leads his people into a life of dependence and duty.

But before I enter upon this account of the words, we may consider the objection that is raised against the doctrine contained in them. Instead of Θεος, which signifies God, there are two copies that have Ο, which signifies that or which; and so they refer it to the mystery he had spoken of before, that this was manifest in the flesh, &c. But, besides the testimony of all other manuscripts against these two, we need do no more than take the affirmation quite through the several particulars, and examine how properly these six things may be said of the gospel.

It is with a great weight upon the phrase to say, that the *gospel* is "justified in the Spirit." The Spirit's revealing, explaining, and impressing it we un-

derstand, and if that is all they mean by the justification of the gospel, it is a very odd way of conveying the notion. Then again, it is said to be "seen of angels;" as they are ministers of providence, and help on the design of grace, it is made known to them; but whether this may be called their *seeing* it, I will leave any one to judge. It may indeed be referred to their contemplation of it in heaven, but how that comes to be a part of the mystery of godliness *to us*, I cannot imagine. That the gospel is "preached unto the Gentiles, and believed on in the world," is true enough; but I cannot apprehend how it is "manifest in the flesh." That it is manifest we grant, because it is preached and believed; but what these words "in the flesh" have to do with it, is not so easy to be conceived. And the last part of the character is more difficult than all the rest, how the gospel should be "received up into glory." This is at least an unusual way of talking. There is more mystery in the language than there is in the thing; and surely they who are against a mysterious doctrine, ought not to confound us with mysterious words. Besides the harshness of the interpretation, I would observe to you these two things;

1. That the whole paragraph is delivered in the form of a report, or a history. He tells us of that which is already done. This can hardly be said of the gospel itself; for we must not speak of its being manifest, as a thing that is *past*, (ἐφανερώθη,) because it still continues to be the light of the world. And if it may be said in any sense to be received up into glory, that is all future, and must refer to the vindication that God will give it at last, when "the judgment is set, and the books are opened;" when persons shall have their secret thoughts disclosed, and their final sentence determined by what is written there. This may indeed be called receiving it into glory; but that is all *to come.*

Now, if you apply these things to our Saviour, it may be truly said of him, that He "was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit," &c. There are proper

periods for each of these. There was a "fulness of time" for the first, and particular appointments for every one of the rest. He yet indeed continues to be "preached unto the Gentiles," and "believed on in the world;" but there was a set time to favour these desolate parts of the earth; and of that he speaks with joy. When the Greeks came to Philip, desiring to see Jesus, "Now, says he, is the hour come that the Son of man shall be glorified," John xii. 22, 23.

And then, his being received into heaven, is an historical truth; there was a day which he devoted to that solemnity. As he was "justified of the Spirit" at his resurrection, being "declared to be the Son of God with power by the Spirit of holiness;" so after he had spoken to the disciples, "a cloud received him out of their sight," Acts i. 9. 22. We read of this as the close of a dispensation, that began with John's baptism, continued through the whole course of what Jesus did and taught, and lasted till the day in which he was taken up from them. All the expressions in the text appear easy according to this interpretation. If we will understand them of Christ, there is no need to force the phrases out of their natural sense, but take them in this book, as we should take them in any other. "The King knows of these things," says the apostle, "before whom I speak freely," Acts xxvi. 26. This is what we must "confess with our mouths, that Jesus died, and believe in our hearts, that God raised him from the dead," Rom. x. 9.

2. He speaks of this as the great mystery of Godliness; the most important *wonder* that ever God revealed; a thing that strikes all the powers of adoration. It is not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, whom God has brought to nought; but his own wisdom in a mystery; that which is hidden, that which he had ordained before the world to our glory, which none of the princes of this world knew; but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit, 1 Cor. ii. 7—10. These are βαθη θεου, the depths of Divinity.

Now if you understand this account of the *gospel*,

that cannot be the greatest mystery. I own it is a mystery to have such a revelation as this in the world, as the means of raising and feeding a spiritual life; but methinks the resurrection of the body, and the happiness of the soul, are greater wonders; that this mortal should put on immortality, that people so defiled should be fitted for heaven, are things that sound more amazing, than to have the gospel made known among the nations.

The apostle would not have drawn on our regard after this manner, "without controversy great is the mystery of Godliness," if there was room to imagine any thing *greater* than what he was going to speak of. It is true, no mystery can be little; but by his manner of introducing this, we should suppose there were degrees among them, and that now he was about to deliver that which is the greatest of all. Now, where lies the extraordinary wonder, that the *gospel* should be "manifest in the flesh," i. e. as they explain it, that it should be preached by men of like passions with ourselves? There are many things that we are more amazed at than this. Where is the peculiar degree of mystery, that it should be "justified by the Spirit," that the Spirit who reveals it by his wisdom, should attend it with his influence? And so you may say of the rest.

But now, it is all wonder; it is as high as our thoughts can rise; nay, by the confession of those who oppose this doctrine, it is more than men can believe; it is too much a mystery, that "GOD should be manifest in the flesh;" that he who seemed to be neglected and forsaken of the Father, should be "justified of the Spirit." That he who was made lower than the angels, was "seen" of them, and owned by them: that he who was made of the seed of Abraham, "a minister of the circumcision," should be "preached unto the Gentiles," to whom he was never sent in person: that he who found so little faith in the earth, is "believed on in the world;" and after he was abandoned both by God and man, should be "received up into glory." These are

wonders of another sort. If there is any comparing of mysteries, we must all of us own, that it is a great deal more for God to give us himself as a companion, than to give us his book for a rule.

The apostle does not only speak of a mystery, but a *great* one, and one that is so *without controversy;* none in the world shall be able to deny it the title, and no one ever did; so far from it, that the people who do not believe it, give a testimony to the greatness of the mystery. There is no controversy about that; no, they are so satisfied upon this head, as to make it their argument against the doctrine, because it is over-mysterious. There are many wonders which they receive, though they cannot explain; but this exceeds them all.

I shall therefore give you the words of the text, as they stand in our translation, for the first branch of the mystery of godliness, or rather the root and ground of all the rest; and you may take them as a doctrine;—

"*God was manifest in the flesh.*"

I am directed by the parts of the text, and its connexion with what went before, to proceed in the following method.

1. The person that he speaks of is *God.*

2. Here is the *manifestation* that he has given of himself.

3. This was *in the flesh;* by taking upon him our nature.

4. This is to be considered both as a *mystery*, and as a mystery of *godliness*, the foundation of practical religion.

I. We may put the question, as the prophet did, "Who is he that comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah," who was thus manifest in the flesh? "He that speaks in righteousness, mighty to save." We have the plain language of the text, that it was the great God. I must own that the title of *God* does not, in every place of Scripture, signify the supreme Deity.

First. It is very certain, that there is such a thing

as a person's being called God, by virtue of his office; and the appellation does not express so much as a moral dignity, or tell us that they who have it are ever the better for it. That sentence in the lxxxii. Psalm, "I have said ye are gods," seems to be said in reproach. For as they judged unjustly, and accepted the persons of the wicked, as they would not understand, but walked on in darkness, calling them gods was no security; for they should "die like men, and fall like one of the princes." As this name cannot dignify a tyrant, it ought not to protect him; for it is given to the vilest being in the creation. The devil himself is called "the god of this world." And he may as well from that title plead for an universal empire, as any other person argue an absolute command.

Secondly. It is also to be confessed, that the name of God is sometimes given in the execution of a particular warrant. And then it is limited to that very commission by which those people are empowered to act. Thus the Lord tells Moses, "I have made thee a god to Pharaoh, and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet," Exod. vii. 1.

Thirdly. It seems to be given to the angels for the dignity of their nature: "Let all the angels of God worship him," Heb. i. 6., is supposed to be a quotation of those words, "Worship him all ye gods," Psal. xcvii. 7. Now the question is, whether the word in my text is capable of any higher sense than these three. For, notwithstanding what I have said, it is certain,

1. That there is but one God; and therefore the communication of the title ought to be regarded with the greatest modesty. No perfections of the divine nature go along with it. This is the language of all true religion, "The Lord our God is one Lord." He alone is the possessor of immortality, μονος ἐχων, 1 Tim. vi. 16. We know that an idol is nothing in the world, οὐδεν ειδωλον ἐν κοσμῳ, and that there is no other God besides one, οὐδεις Θεος ἑτερος ἐι μη εἱς. For though there are those who are called gods, either in

heaven or in earth, as there are gods many, and lords many; yet unto us there is one God the Father, of whom are all things, ἐξ οὗ as the fountain out of which they are taken, and we unto him εἰς αὐτον; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him, 1 Cor. viii. 4—6. The heathen ran into a whimsical devotion, by fancying a multitude of deities; but the wiser sort among them acknowledged one supreme power, and whenever any of them came out of their erroneous opinion, they loaded it with the utmost abhorrence. "They turned from idols to serve the living and true God;" as it was foretold, the Gentiles should come from the ends of the earth, and say, Surely our fathers have inherited vanity, lies, and things wherein there is no profit. Will a man make gods to himself which are no gods? Jer. xvi. 19, 20. Nothing in revelation ever broke in upon the unity of the Godhead. The supposition of two natures, equally supreme, almighty, and eternal, can have no place in reason, and no pretence from Scripture. It is "life eternal to know the only true God." John xvii. 3.

2. Though God has suffered creatures to wear his titles, yet he has always expressed a jealousy at their sharing his honour. Both the angelic and human nature have sunk under his hand, when they made any pretensions this way. Lucifer, the son of the morning, said, I will be like the most High; I will exalt my throne above the stars of God, Isa. xiv. 12. 14. And thus being lifted up with pride, he fell into that which is called "the condemnation of the devil;" and so it fared with our first parents. They had a mind to be as gods, and upon that he drove out the man. So it has been with particular tyrants. Nebuchadnezzar, by raising himself to be a god, was degraded to the level of a beast, to live and feed as they do, in their manner, and perhaps in their company. The king of Tyrus had his heart lifted up, and said, I am a god, I sit in the seat of God; and he had set his heart as the heart of God. And upon this crime you have terrible animadversions of providence.

Wilt thou say yet before him that slays thee, I am a god? but thou shalt be a man, and no god, in the hand of him that slays thee, Ezek. xxviii. 2. 9. Thus the man of sin, the son of perdition, opposes and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. This wicked one will the Lord consume with the Spirit of his mouth, and destroy with the brightness of his coming, 2 Thes. ii. 4. 8.

So that you see, though God has been pleased to allow the title, yet it is with such limitations, that it must never signify in any other than himself, a supremacy of power, or a claim to worship. The angels, though they have their name with an eminence that the greatest of men cannot pretend to, yet are not raised by it above the temper and the posture of devotion. Though they excel in strength, they obey his commandments, fulfil his pleasure, and hearken to the voice of his word, Psal. ciii. 20. Nor dare any of them take the homage with the title. One of them would not let John fall down before him, but says in a peremptory manner, See thou do it not, for I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren the prophets: worship thou God, Rev. xxii. 9.

From hence you may conclude, that whoever is called by the name of God, and upon that makes a demand of religious worship, must be either a Creator or an usurper. Thus antichrist "as God, sits in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God." And would Christ do any thing to give a suspicion of making himself equal with God? Would he being a man, make himself God, if he had not the same eternal nature? When he rose again from the dead, it was said *of* him, "Worship him all ye gods;" and *to* him, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever," Heb. i. 6. 8. This proves that he is greater than those who are called gods, either from their office, or the dignity of a derived nature.

Though worship is oftentimes no more than a civility, yet it is impossible that the word should carry

so low a sense in this place. God has ordered his angels to attend his servants, to bear them up in their hands, but can that be called by the name of worship? Why should we then suppose, when God saith with all this solemnity, "Let the angels worship him," he means any less by it than every reader would think that David did in the psalm from which it is taken? where he tells us of a Jehovah that reigns; that clouds and darkness are about him, righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne: that the hills melted like wax at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth; that the heavens declare his righteousness, and all the people see his glory, Psal. xcvii. 2—5. What! is he speaking all this of a titular god, one that has the name, but not the nature? No surely: On purpose to distinguish the God whom he means from the creatures that are only called so, he turns with indignation upon others, "Confounded be all they that serve graven images, and then adds "Worship him all ye gods." Would any mortal be at a loss about the explication of these words, as they stand in the Old Testament? And are they debased and sunk into a lower sense, when they are brought into the New? Do not they contain as much in the apostle, as they did in the psalmist?

Nay, you may carry the consideration much further. In the psalm they are supposed to be spoken by David. Though he received them under the direction of the Holy Spirit, yet he delivers them in his own name; it is a call of the same kind with that, Psal. ciii. 21. "Bless the Lord ye his angels," and, Psal. cxlviii. 1, 2. "Praise the Lord in the heavens, praise him in the heights, praise him all his angels, praise him all his hosts." Thus he wishes here, "Worship him all ye Gods." But in the epistle to the Hebrews, the sentence is placed with more dignity, as it comes out of the mouth of God himself, "Again when he brings the first begotten into the world, HE saith, let all the angels of God worship him." He saith it, who has so often said that he is

"a jealous God, and will not give his worship to another." Would not any one conclude that our worship may safely follow that of the angels? But

I will keep within the argument of the text; the person who manifested himself in the flesh, is here called *God*. I have allowed that the mere title does not always signify what we mean by divinity; but the question is, whether it is here capable of so low a notion. I desire you will still keep in mind what I have already told you, that God never gave the title with a design of conveying religious worship to those that have it. And, therefore, if we find either the Father has given, or Christ himself has taken the name of God, on purpose to engage our faith, to possess our reverence, and lead us even into the lowest adorations, we must conclude that he is God who was manifest in the flesh.

You are very sensible that this doctrine is avowed upon several other scriptures, and therefore to enter with a full design into the controversy, is to consider them all, which I shall not do from this text. My business is to lay before you what I take to be contained in these words, and shall never bring in any other passages than as they give an illustration to this. To that purpose I would observe,

1. That the question is not whether Christ was man, and had an inferior nature to the Father; that is confessed by all, and therefore,

2. It is to no manner of purpose to observe how many more texts there are to prove him a Mediator, than to prove him a God, because that is properly the main account we are to have of him.

3. His hiding the Deity, suffering it not to be known, and publicly owned, is no argument against it, because it was part of his obedience to become of no reputation, and to make way for the death of the cross.

4. If there are but a few places, nay, if there is but one in the Bible where his divinity is revealed, it is the same thing as if there were a thousand. The

second text does not add to the truth of the first, it can only confirm it.

5. There are several passages which must either be so understood, or we shall find it necessary to lay aside the usual meaning of words, and bring a new sense to them.

6. This has been the belief of good people, and an opinion that the Spirit of God has witnessed to. It has raised them above their fears, and proved their greatest support in a dying hour.

7. If they were wrong in this, they must have been guilty of the worst of crimes, and have gone out of the world in an act of *idolatry*. And how shall we account for the satisfaction they had in dying? If that was all a delusion, will it not be very hard to prove there is any reality in godliness?

8. If he is not God, we are in no better a condition, nay upon some accounts in much worse than those under the law; for then God revealed himself to them with a greater majesty. He governed them by *himself*, which was more than speaking to them by *his Son*, upon supposition that he was an inferior.

9. None but a God could have answered the end of being manifest in the flesh, as a prophet to teach effectually, as a priest to make reconciliation, and as a King of saints, to be head over all things unto the Church.

10. The character of Deity is what the Scripture has laid upon all the other branches of this mystery; his being justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, and received up into glory.

1. It is no part of the question, whether Christ was man, and might not say with all propriety, "my Father is greater than I; the Son can do nothing of himself, but what he sees the Father do; there is a day and hour which the Son knows not of; and the Son himself shall be subject to him that has put all things under him, that God may be all in all," John

v. 19; Mark xiii. 32; 1 Cor. xv. 27, 28. This matter is universally confessed, that he was "the man Christ Jesus;" though he uses a word to express it that cannot signify so much in him as it does in us, when he calls himself *the Son of man.* When we are called so, the meaning can be no other than that we are produced by two human parents, which is more than can be said of him, and therefore in his genealogy, the historian is very cautious. He tells us, Jesus was about thirty years of age, "being, as was supposed, the son of Joseph," Luke iii. 23. But that supposition was ill grounded, because this was the sign that God himself would give his people, the only instance that we have of it in all ages of the world, that a virgin should conceive and bear a son, Isa. vii. 14. The manner of bringing this about, is told by the angel in language that is never to be changed: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the highest shall overshadow thee, and therefore the holy thing that shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God," Luke i. 35. So that the very producing of his human nature was a Divine act. And yet

There is no controversy upon this head, that he was truly the man Christ Jesus. It is allowed, that, "forasmuch as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he likewise himself took part of the same. It behoved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren. We have not an high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin," Heb. ii. 14—17; iv. 15. So that though that body was what God provided for him, yet he was really "made of a woman." He had "the likeness of sinful flesh; he took upon him those infirmities, and submitted to those vexations in our nature, as if he had been a sinner. Sin was to be "condemned in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law may be fulfilled in those that walk after the Spirit." Therefore these two principles are the main articles of our religion, that there is "but one God, and one media-

tor between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." He is, what the primitive promise foretold he should be, "the seed of the woman." The word was made flesh, and dwelt among us. We have seen with our eyes, we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of that word of life," John i. 14; 1 John i. 1.

2. It answers no manner of purpose to observe how many more texts there are to prove him a man, than there are to tell us he is God. There is a plain reason for this, because our concern with him is in his mediatorial title. "Our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." "Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel." He is the daysman between God and us. We read of Christ that "by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions, principalities or powers, all things were created by him and for him; and he is before all things, and by him all things consist," Col. i. 16, 17. But how many of these invisibles he has made, the height of these thrones, the nature of these dominions, the number of these principalities and powers, what worlds he has formed, how he rules them, (for they are created *for* him, as well as *by* him,) the Scripture tells us nothing of, because the design of the gospel is not to give us the glory that he has from his several creatures, but that which comes from the *redemption* that he has undertaken. It is more our concern to know that he is "head over all things unto the church," than that principalities and powers are subject to him; that he redeems us, than that he rules them.

So that I suppose you will not be much moved by an argument that is often used, "that Christ is seldom called God, but there is scarce a page in the New Testament wherein he is not represented as less than God." No manner of doubt of it; because the design of the book is to consider him as "manifest in the flesh," as taking away sin, "by the sacrifice of him-

self." And therefore if he was called a man ten thousand times, it proves but these two things; first, That he really was so, which none denies; and, secondly, That our regard to him must be as he is so. This is life eternal, to know Jesus Christ, whom God has sent. The apostle speaks of "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord," Phil. iii. 8. This is not a knowledge of what he does among the angels, how he ordered the sea and land, giving the former its decree, and the latter its settlement; how he set a compass upon the face of the heavens. We are not so much interested in these things, as in his rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth, and having his delight among the sons of men, Prov. viii. 27. 31. That I may know him, says he, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, and be made conformable to his death, Phil. iii. 10.

3. His hiding the Deity, and not letting himself be known and confessed abroad, is no argument that he is not God. Because this was the necessary humiliation of one nature, and prepared for the sufferings of another. The divine nature could not die, and therefore all the humbling of this was to make himself of no reputation; to lay aside the form of God in which he was, and take upon him the form of a servant. The remark that some give us upon this text, that the *form* of God does not prove that he was God, but only like him, sweeps away the rest of the verse at once. They may as well say, "the fashion of a man" and "the form of a servant" do not signify the reality of the nature he took, or the sufferings that he felt, but only a resemblance of them both. The criticism, instead of garbling the text, quite destroys it, and makes his human nature a phantom, as well as the divine no more than a resemblance. He charged the devils that they should not make him known to be "the holy one of God." It was needful that he should be "despised and rejected of men," a servant of rulers. This he could not have been, had he suffered his brightness to appear. But that is what "none of the

princes of this world knew, for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." When he had been owned by the Father in the mount of transfiguration, he ordered his disciples to let none know it, till the Son of man was risen again, Matt. xvii. 9; and gave this as the reason for it, that he was to be delivered into the hands of sinful men. When the young man came and kneeled to him, he refused the honours that were his due. "Why callest thou me good?" And this was one branch of his humiliation.

4. If there are but a few places of Scripture where he is called God, nay, if there is but one that reveals to us the truth of his Divine nature, it is the same thing as if there were a thousand. This is what I need not much insist on, because it carries its own evidence. One text may receive light from another, but it has a fulness of truth within itself. It is not here as it ought to be in some affairs among men, that one witness shall not be sufficient; at the mouth of two or three witnesses must the thing be determined. This is needful when we have to do with creatures that are false and fallible; that will deceive, and may be deceived; liable to take a delusion, and ready to give one. But it is otherwise when God is the speaker. "He is not a man that he should lie." "A God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is he." His words do not want any thing to give them an importance, but are "as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times." So that if he has but said it once, there is as great a foundation as our faith can desire. It is as true that "Shalman spoiled Betharbel in the day of battle," which is never mentioned but Hos. x. 14, as it is that "Jeroboam the son of Nebat made Israel to sin," which is dropped into the story of almost every king that succeeded him.

I lay down this principle to take off the terror of an objection that has in it a great deal more noise than substance; that there is no comparison between the number of texts that declare the human nature of Christ, and those that give him the title and the attri-

butes of a God. This signifies nothing at all to the argument. It only shows, that we are to believe he was man, made of a woman, and that he is chiefly revealed to us in the state of a Mediator, as placing himself between God and sinners, making up the quarrel, and filling up the distance. As that is our principal concern with him, so he is frequently revealed in a character that suits with the faith we have in him, and the expectation we have from him. "Him has God set forth, a propitiation through faith in his blood."

His absolute Deity is what we have the less concern with. It is not so much to our purpose to know what other worlds he has created; in what manner "all things are upheld by the word of his power," as that he has "by himself purged away our sins," and in our nature is "made better than the angels." This is the report of the gospel, the record that God has given us of his Son. If he has made thrones and dominions, and principalities and powers, (as we are told he has,) yet it is not the work of the Bible to give the records of his government over these. For as he is before all things, so by him all things consist; (ἐν ἀυτω παντα συνεστηκε, in him they are held together;) he has bound the creation, given a beauty to the parts, and a harmony to the whole. But our business is to know what he has done, and will do for the redemption of human nature; so that it is no wonder that the book of God is taken up with the story of his life and transactions in the habitable parts of the earth, and the course of his delights among the sons of men. The word was made flesh, and dwelt among us; full of grace and truth: and of his fulness have we received, and grace for grace; for the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ," John i. 14. 16, 17.

These accounts determine nothing of his antecedent state. His dwelling among us, and being made flesh, is not to be understood in any contradiction to his being with God, and his being God, and that the world was made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made, John i. 3, 4. "The

Son of man ascended up where he was before," John vi. 62. The evidence or importance of a truth, does not depend on the number of texts that are brought for it. If there is but a single revelation, if only "one in a certain place" has said it, it is enough, because it comes from a God that cannot lie; but we may say upon this head, as the Psalmist has done upon another, "God has spoken once, yea twice have I heard it." For,

5. There are several Scriptures that cannot be understood of any other than God manifest in the flesh, unless we will lay aside the usual meaning of words, and give them a sense in the Bible which they can bear no where else. "Except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye speak into the air." It is scarce to be conceived, that he who has given us this book for a rule of faith and practice, would suffer so many places in it to carry an uncertain sense, and lay us under any temptation of mistaking, in a matter that so nearly concerns his own glory. I have before told you that I shall not enter into the full controversy, because I would not bring in all the texts that refer to it under this one; and therefore I shall only mention a few that declare the person of our Redeemer to be the true God.

One is, Isa. ix. 6. "To us a child is born, to us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulders; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." Here we read of his incarnation, in the first and lowest part of life; "to us a child is born, to us a son is given;" that can be understood of no other than him, who was made of a woman, and made under the law. "The government shall be upon his shoulders." We should think that this is too much for a creature; but lest it should be taken for no more than a delegation of authority committed to him, we are told at large who he is. This is the name whereby "he shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the

Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end; he shall sit upon the throne of David." Here are things thrown together that plainly relate to different natures. He is said to sit upon the throne of David, which signifies a spiritual empire over his people in this world; and yet, that of his government there shall be no end; whereas we know, that the places where he has it, shall be destroyed. So that the immortality of his kingdom, and the peace that arises from it, must be understood of something to which the throne of David never reached. Again, it is said that he is born a Son, and yet that his name shall be called the Everlasting Father; that he is given to us as a child, and yet that he is the Mighty God.

One would think that the manner of speaking this should be no part of the objection, that he is not said to *be* so, but only that it is the name whereby he shall be "called." For though the title of god is given to persons who fill the office, yet this is too much to be said, that such a one is "the Mighty God;" and it transcends all imagination, that any creature should be called "the Everlasting Father." What a great deal of learning must be forced into the service, to disrobe these words of the majesty they appear with? We will suppose, that they signify no more than a god by office; that they are only names of divinity, and do not express the true nature. But would the generality of people take them so? We may say upon this argument, "What is written in the law, how readest thou?"

Is it not pity that so many thousands of humble, serious persons, should be under a necessity of thinking wrong upon the subject, only for want of that critical learning, that reaches such a very little way? Must a man be either a critic or an idolater? Can we think that God, who was so gracious as to give us this book, has made it like a broken trumpet, to give an uncertain sound? Is this the way for those that err in spirit to come to understanding, and those that murmured to learn doctrine? Can we say, upon

this supposition, that he causes light to shine out of darkness, and gives us in our hearts the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ? That he should tell us of a child, and call him the Everlasting Father, which is the highest name that he takes to himself! That he should charge us to call a person, like ourselves, by the title of the Mighty God, which is the greatest word that we can use, and belongs to none but an infinite nature! I say, why should he thus ensnare our souls with metaphors? There is not one reader in a thousand but would think that the person here spoken of was *God.*

Suppose the former part of the verse was left out, or the whole varied thus, "this is my name whereby I will be called; the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace;" would not all mankind believe the words were incapable of any lower sense than what agrees to the supreme Being? And do they signify any less by the addition of that clause, "to us a child is born, a Son is given?" It is hard indeed upon those who do not read the text with a criticism that sucks out the main force of it.

What men of deep thought and vast abilities may do, I know not; they have got the art of making Divine titles signify only a *creature*, and Divine worship only a *civility.* But other people will be at a loss, who would gladly always speak of God, as they speak of no one besides; who use words both of him, and to him, which they dare not give to any other being. It will be difficult for such as those, to know how to talk, because their best phrases are gone. They will want language for devotion, if he must be called the Mighty God, who is not the Mighty God, and he the Everlasting Father, who is not the Everlasting Father. There is no getting higher than these terms. And can we imagine that God would use "great swelling words of vanity," or say that of a child, which is downright false of every one but himself, if what our Saviour says was not true, "I and my Father are one?" John x. 30.

Another text that I think cannot be diverted from

this interpretation is, Mic. v. 2, "thou Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto me, that is to be the ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been of old from everlasting." Here we are under every necessity to suppose, that he speaks of a Messiah, from the place of his birth. "Thou Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall HE come." This was a circumstance that both Jews and Christians were agreed in, that Christ should come out of Bethlehem, the town where David dwelt; and that expression, he shall come forth "unto me," shows his errand, that he was to be the Mediator between God and man. He should glorify the Father on earth: his meat and drink was to do the will of him that sent him, and to finish his work. Who is it then, that should have his nativity at Bethlehem, and such a concern with the great God? One whose "goings forth have been of old, from everlasting."

We will suppose for a while, that those goings forth of old were no more than the manifestations that he made of himself to the patriarchs and prophets; it was the angel who went before them in their marches from Egypt, and frequently appeared to them in the promised land. This sense of the text shows that he went forth "of old;" but what shall we do with the other word, "from everlasting?" To say that this sometimes signifies no more than a long while to come, when it is mentioned in prophesy, cannot be denied; but that therefore it signifies only a long while past, when it is delivered in history, is by no means to be allowed. Several things that shall perish, are said to be *for ever*, because they will hold for many ages; but I do not know that any thing is from eternity, or has that title given to it, besides the nature and counsels of God. "In his times he will show who is the blessed and only potentate; who only has immortality," 1 Tim. vi. 15, 16.

To everlasting, may be applied to saints and angels, and the happiness of both; but it is only said of one,

"*from* everlasting to everlasting thou art God," Psal. xc. 2. We may limit the passages that give the character of eternity for the time to come, but it was never once bestowed upon any thing as to what is past; and therefore, if his goings forth of old, which have been from everlasting, mean no more than that he has done thus for several ages, it is using the word as it never was used before, and so as no human thought can reconcile to sense. It is false, it is monstrous, and a gross absurdity to say, that any created person was from everlasting, or that he was "before all things." Had it been only that he was from the beginning, or ever the earth was, or that he had a "glory with the Father before the world was," some diminutive sense might be forced in upon the words, that they only tell us he had a being antecedent to this creation; and could not an angel have said so too? If the phrases mean no more than an existence before our world, they make him no better than the angels. Those stars of the morning sung together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy, when this earth of ours was made, Job xxxviii. 7. So that, if that is all that Christ means in Prov. viii. he speaks beneath himself.

The angels had a glory with the Father before the world was; but the words under our present thoughts do not admit of such an interpretation as is fixed with so much violence upon others; for here it said, that he is "from everlasting." Angels have had their goings forth of old. They flew about this world of ours after it was put into shape; but can it be said of them without horrid blasphemy, that they are "from everlasting?" And therefore that which is here affirmed of the prince that should rise out of Bethlehem, the man that is to be our peace, is too much for a creature. It is a contradiction to all derived being, eternally inconsistent with any beginning. It can never be said of Him, that there was a time when he was not. We may apply to him in these words, "From everlasting to everlasting thou art God." But I shall open no more scriptures now, in the pursuit of

this argument; I see it will be better to distribute them under the several branches of the text that are yet to be considered.

6. That God was manifest in the flesh, has been the faith of good people in all ages. As they believed in God, they believed in Christ. This indeed, of itself, is no conclusive argument, because our faith does not stand in the wisdom or holiness of man, but in the power of God; nevertheless, it is not to be despised. This was the great persuasive to lay aside every weight, and the sin that easily besets us, because we are encompassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses. We are followers of them who through faith and patience do inherit the promises, when we abide in the doctrine of Christ.

That this has been the opinion of those who have served their generation according to the will of God, will scarce be denied. The quotations we have out of the ancient writers that seem to look another way, are to me of very little value, for this one reason; that as far as we can judge of the primitive church by the New Testament, the great controversy was not so much about Christ's divinity, as his humanity. "Many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an Antichrist," 2 John 7. It was then, as he calls it, the spirit of Antichrist, and the spirit of error. The opinion, I suppose, was not, that he never appeared to the world, but that he did not take upon him our real nature; it was not "in the flesh." This was the delusion of those times, which the holy writer confutes in so particular a manner. "That which was from the beginning, which we have seen, heard, looked upon, and which our hands have handled, declare we unto you." This shows that Christ had more than a resemblance of our nature. That was the error against which he delivers all his caution. "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God; every

spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God; and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God. And this is that spirit of Antichrist whereof ye have heard that it should come, and even now already is it in the world," 1 John iv. 1—3. It is more difficult to conceive that an angel should be made a man, than that he who is the great Mediator should be a God. I think human reason would find more arguments against the truth of his death, than against the divinity of his person. And indeed we could not have believed either of these without a revelation; for "Christ crucified is to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness."

Now, I will suppose, that this opinion continued some time after; therefore it is no wonder that we find passages in the writings of the fathers, that tell us plainly that he was man; and on purpose to give this assertion the greater force and weight, they may have contrived a method of speaking that has rendered them a little obscure to posterity. You may take these three things along with you.

First, That it was certainly right in them to lay down the truth of our Saviour's human nature. This is a fundamental article; not only to our faith, as it regards the doctrines of Christianity, but to our hope and comfort. Without this, he is not "the seed of the woman;" he has made no satisfaction, nor can he present us "in the body of his flesh through death."

Secondly, The vehemence of their asserting this might be owing to the opposition that was made by unbelievers. This, as I have already shown, seems to be the prevailing opinion; and therefore, perhaps, some learned and good men might exceed in the way they took to deliver themselves. But,

Thirdly, It is very plain that many have spoiled the doctrine "through philosophy and vain deceit." I fear there were temptations to bring some men into the church whom the grace of God never brought thither, because of their human learning. They per-

haps were too much admired; they came to Christ Jesus, not as learners, but as teachers, and thus threw in their own froth into the sincere milk of the word, which curdled it upon the minds of men. The apostle came not with any (ὑπεροχη λογε η σοφιας,) supereminence of phrase or wisdom, declaring the testimony of God. He determined to know nothing among them but Jesus Christ, and him crucified. His speech and preaching was not in these persuasive terms of human wisdom, (πειθοις ἀνθρωπινης σοφιας λογοις,) but in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power.

Those phrases, "Light of Light, God of God, very God of very God," have too much of the philosopher in them, and too little of the Christian. It is not worth the while to contend about them, for they will be unintelligible when we have done all we can. To me it is of more value, what a company of serious persons think in their devotions, who are filled with a reverence for God, and a jealousy of sin, than what is agreed upon by a set of preachers, who oftentimes meet only to bite and devour one another.

That which I lay the greatest weight upon is, not so much that the deity of Christ has been maintained and proved by persons of vast abilities, men skilled in languages, history, and the methods of argument; but that it is a doctrine supported by the witness of the Spirit in the hearts of believers, as that which is according to godliness. Feeling, I confess, is an individual argument. It is what a man cannot communicate to another; but still all the world will allow me to regard those principles that have had the best influence upon them that professed them. I have seen people courageous in an evil day, devout and reverent in all the acts of worship, and cheerful to meet their death; and they have given *this* as a reason of the joy and hope that was in them. I must think well of the principles, unless I think very ill of the persons.

This was the apostle's great cordial. "Though I suffer these things, I am not ashamed, for I know in

whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep what I have committed to him against that day." You see his confidence is in the power, the ability of him on whom he depended; and that which represented him in this character was his infinite perfections. We are "strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might," Eph. vi. 10. We look for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life, Jude 21; his mercy brings us into that life; and then it is added, "Now to him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be dominion and power for ever;" v. 24, 25; we are preserved by the mercy of the Lord Jesus. He is here said to "present us before the presence of his glory," as elsewhere we read that he will "present us to himself," and that he does it as "the only wise God our Saviour."

This has made good people easy both in life and death. They have looked on him as "the resurrection and the life." What they have believed of his Divinity has gone deeper into their holiness and comfort, than any other principle could do. This has been their supporting consideration, the very thing that gave them all their courage. Thus the Spirit does his office by taking of the things of Christ, and showing them unto men. He shows us his life and his death, that the one was holy, and the other dreadful; but the glory that he gives to Christ, is upon other heads, as our Lord himself expounds it; "All that the Father has are mine, and therefore I said, He shall take of mine, and show it unto you," John xvi. 14, 15. It was with reference to his union with the Father, his share in the glory, the dominion, in all that the Father has, that the Spirit does thus reveal him.

7. If these good people were wrong in their opinion, it will obscure all the experimental part of religion, the joys and pleasures with which they gave themselves to God; first in worship, and at last in death. What must we say for the power of godli-

ness after this? because, when they rested on a Saviour in the last acts of faith, when they looked unto Jesus in the closing moments of life, as the author and finisher of faith, and in that regarded him as God, they must have gone out of the world in a gross idolatry.

Do not let any one tell me, I may give worship to him, though he is a creature, if only my greatest devotion be paid through him to the Divine Nature. I know nothing that more expresses my dependence, or can be called worship in a truer sense, than the last offices of my faith on a death-bed. If bowing my head, and giving up the ghost, is not devotion, I know not what is; and I should be very unwilling in that hour to rely upon one who is less than God. As mediator, he is not the proper object of our faith and hope, but only introduces and leads them in. "*By him* we believe in God, who raised him from the dead, and gave him glory, that our faith and hope may be *in God;*" 1 Peter i. 21, and certainly we would have our faith and hope in God when we die. No serious person would say less than David did, "Into thy hands I commit my spirit; thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth." Here his faith and hope were in God, as they ought to be.

But what shall we think of the martyr Stephen, when he cries out with a loud voice, "Lord Jesus receive my spirit?" Did his words contain any thing less than David's? Was not his dependence upon the same power? Did he not regard this Jesus as able to save him? And would he have ventured his spirit into any other hands than those of a God? Dare we say, that he did not die with a faith as well placed as David's? I am sure, if he to whom he committed his spirit is not God, he was guilty of perverting his allegiance in the greatest solemnity of all. It was too much to say to a creature. David had two things in view at that time. First, his own comfort, "into thy hands I commit my spirit; thou hast redeemed me;" and, secondly, God's glory. This was the last thing that he could do towards it, and therefore

he gave him his titles, "O Lord God of truth." Had he applied to any one besides, he had lost both these ends; he had been guilty of destroying his own peace, and of alienating from God the honour that he was bound to give him; but he had none, even in heaven but God, no creature above the angels whom he could desire besides him. And did Stephen come any lower, when he said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit?" He did the greatest, as well as the last thing that could be done, in a way of devotion and confidence: and had he any other in heaven besides David's God? If so, the redemption of mankind, instead of drawing us to God, draws us from him. He that had no partner in his honour before, must have one now; and souls under the New Testament can die into the arms of a person who is not God, though they under the Old could not think of doing so without horror. But doubtless when Stephen said this, he did not only conceive of Jesus as a Jew after the flesh, but as "God over all, blessed for evermore."

A gentleman, with whom I had the honour of some acquaintance, who had lived many years in a public character, both in the army and parliament, confessed to an intimate friend, from whom I have the story, that he had for a long time many doubts about the Divinity of Christ; but, said he, "Now death is coming on, I find none but a God will do; and if he is not *that*, I cannot venture my soul into his hands." If this is a falsehood, it is pity it ever should be a dying principle. It is an Almighty act that makes us Christians. "We are born of God;" and "he who has begun this good work, will perform it to the day of Christ," 1 John iii. 9; Phil. i. 6. And surely this can be no other than God; and therefore, when we look to Jesus as "the author and finisher of faith," it is to him as beginning the good work, and to him as performing it.

8. If he is not God who was manifest in the flesh, our cause is no better than that of the Jews; nay, in some respects, a great deal worse. They had a noble

dispensation: God revealed himself to them by signs, and wonders, and voices, by a mighty hand, and an outstretched arm. He is said to be in the midst of them. They heard his voice. The cloud that covered the tabernacle was such a presence of the Deity as exceeded all that we know, if it was only a creature who came down among us. Now it is mentioned as the glory of these last days, that "God has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed to be the heir of all things." There is no more in this than speaking by Moses, if he was not counted worthy of more glory than Moses; and that he is not as a messenger, but as an author, inasmuch as "he that builded the house has more honour than the house."

Christ put himself into a meaner way than Moses did. All the prophets that ever went before him made a greater figure; but the distinction lay in this. "They saw his glory as the glory of the only begotten of the Father," John i. 14. God had spoken to the world, sometimes by prophets, and sometimes by priests who were the standing ministers of his house, and suppose now at last he had sent down an angel to be the preacher among us, this had been really a greater dispensation than what we are under. For though it is confessed that Christ had a nature above the angels, yet as he appeared so much lower than they, that passes for nothing.

But the main glory of the dispensation consists in this, that his name is called Immanuel, which is God with us, Matt. i. 23. In a lower sense, that might have been said with truth of every hero, every prophet, their captains in the field, and their priests in the temple, that God was with them; but it never was made the name of a person. If the most glorious angel in heaven was to be sent down as the general of our forces, or a teacher in our assemblies, and a blessing attended him, it might be said we had the Divine presence, but we must never have called him Immanuel. So that it signifies that in our Saviour, which it could not have done in any creature. It is the character of his *person*. You must not ap-

ply it to the spiritual presence of God with his people, for there has been more of that since Christ's time than there was before. He was with us in a greater glory at the day of Pentecost, and in a more populous conversion. But when this is said of a child that should be born, it is abstracted from all successes; in having *him*, we have *God with us*. He that had seen him, had seen the Father; so that there was no need to say, Show us the Father: he was in the Father, and the Father in him, John xiv. 9, 10. God himself was manifest in the flesh. This exceeds all that ever the Jews had; and therefore their privileges are mentioned in a rising way. "To them pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the promises," Rom. ix. 4, 5. In some of these they go beyond us. We have nothing equal to the giving of the law that was ordained by angels, and the glory that covered their tabernacle and filled their temple. "Theirs were the Fathers;" but the last, in which our interest is comprehended, is greater than all the rest, that "of them, as concerning the flesh, Christ came." How comes that to be the crowning privilege, but as he is "over all, God blessed for ever?"

9. If he was not God, his manifestation in the flesh would not have answered the great ends for which it is appointed. He came as a high priest to make atonement, as a king of saints to be "head over all things to his church;" and this he could not be without "the fulness of him who fills all in all," Eph. i. 22, 23.

10. The character of Deity may be allowed here, because the Spirit has carried it through all the other branches of the mystery. As a God he is "justified in the Spirit," "declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead," Rom. i. 4. As a God he is seen of angels; for when the Father "brings in the first begotten into the world, he saith, let all the angels worship him," Heb. i. 6. As a God he is preached unto the Gentiles; "Look unto me and be

ye saved all the ends of the earth; for I am the Lord, and there is none else," Isa. xlv. 22. As a God he is believed on in the world; for our "faith and hope must be in God," 1 Pet. i. 21. And as a God he is received up into glory; for "to the Son he saith, thy throne O God is for ever and ever," Heb. i. 8.

II. The great mystery of Godliness tells us, that this God was *manifested.* The revelation he has made of himself is the ground of all our religion. Without it there could be no worship and no hope. Our drawing nigh to him, and all our expectations from him, are only the rebound of those discoveries in which he has appeared to us. The psalmist has placed these things in their true order, "When thou saidst, seek ye my face, my heart said unto thee, thy face Lord will I seek."

The good of any dispensation arises from the degrees it gives us of this Divine knowledge. Whatever sets out the author of our being in a truer and greater light, must be the more desirable; and therefore, on this account, the gospel that is preached in these last days exceeds all the older methods of devotion, because there we have a better manifestation of God. As we can have nothing higher than eternal life, so "this is life eternal, to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent," John xvii. 2, 3.

Under this head I shall inquire in what characters God is to be known of men, by which it will appear that the New Testament ought to have the preference that the Holy Spirit has given it, to all the other revelations that were ever made; because the main subject of our ministry is Christ Jesus the Lord, and the success of it is the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the person or face, (ἐν προσωπῳ,) of Jesus Christ, 2 Cor. iv. 5, 6.

The question then before us is, what we are to know of God in order to the practice of duty, and the assurance of hope; under what notions are we to receive him into our minds? I answer, 1. As the God that made us and all the world. 2. As the object of universal worship. 3. As our Lawgiver.

4. As our Judge. 5. As an offended Sovereign. 6. As the Author of reconciliation. 7. As the Contriver of a sufficient righteousness. 8. As the Fountain of that grace by which we are restored to his image. 9. As the great Example of holiness and purity. 10. As the Giver of those joys that are laid up in another world.

Under these characters has the great God revealed himself to us. Thus he is to be known, and upon these grounds to be admired with reverence and a godly fear. He has in various ways and different measures given out these glories of his name; but the best appearance in which we have them all, is the sending of his Son "in the likeness of sinful flesh," and the publication of his word to mankind. Thus he has "abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light by the gospel." We have the "light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God," 2 Cor. iv. 4. Several of these manifestations are what the heathen lived under; but in regarding them I shall have three things in my view: First, The impressing of this truth upon you, that *thus* we are to conceive of the great God in all our applications to him; Secondly, That even in those common ideas that we have of him, the gospel has given us a *peculiar* evidence; and, Thirdly, That all these titles belong to our blessed Saviour, which I hope you will find as we advance through the several particulars.

1. One manifestation that God has made of himself is in a character that gives us our most early concern with him, that he is the former of all things. We come before him with a song, and enter into his presence with thanksgiving, because he is the Lord our God, we are the work of his hand, and the sheep of his pasture; he has made us, and not we ourselves, Psal. c. 2, 3. This account of himself he has scattered all over the universe. It is said of those who have no revealed religion, that what may be known of God is manifest in them, and shown to them. Nay, the invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things

that do appear, even his eternal power and Godhead, Rom. i. 19, 20. The volumes that he has published of his own perfections, are large and copious. The heavens declare the glory of the Lord, and the firmament shows his handy-work; day unto day utters speech, and night unto night declares knowledge; and there is no voice or language where their speech is not heard, Psal. xix. 1—3.

But yet even this common argument is placed in a better light by the coming of Jesus Christ. He lets us understand the creation to more advantage. He has adjusted, improved, and enlightened the principles of nature. So that by faith we understand that the worlds were made by the word of God, for the things that are, were not made of things that do appear, Heb. ix. 3. You must not think that natural religion gives us one God, and Christianity another. The apostle tells the Athenians, "Him whom ye ignorantly worship, declare I unto you." They might by his instructions, know the Deity in a better way than they ever would have done by observation and philosophy. He speaks of him under principles which they confessed. "God that made the world, and all things therein, seeing he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwells not in temples made with hands." He argues, you see, from our primitive notions of the divine nature, to show the folly of all superstition. "Neither is he worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing." This indeed is what those confused idolaters could not imagine; but he draws it from a principle which every one owned, "seeing that he gives to all life, and breath, and all things." With this reason he batters down their impure devotions, "We ought not to think the Godhead is like unto silver and gold, or stone graven by art or man's device." This corruption they had run into; and though it is unworthy of those sentiments which themselves allowed, yet it was the gospel alone that set them at liberty from the contradiction they offered to their own principles. "The times of this ignorance

God winked at, but now he commands all men every where to repent," Acts. xvii. 23—30.

The world never knew him aright as a Creator till he revealed himself as a Redeemer. In the scheme of salvation we see how the universe obtained its form and its being. When God was manifest in the flesh, we beheld our author. It is said of him that came among us, that all things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made; in him was life. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, though the world knew him not. John i. 3, 4. 10. In this revelation we contemplate the Lord our Maker. This truth lies open in the scheme of redemption, to be seen and read of all men. "God has in these last days spoken to us by his Son, whom he has appointed the heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds, Heb. i. 1, 2. This is part of the discovery that we have by the gospel, "to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery that has been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ, Eph. iii. 9. When he says, that his rejoicing was in the habitable parts of the earth, and his delights among the sons of men, he takes care to tell us, that at the preparing of the heavens he was there, that he set a compass upon the face of the deep, he established the clouds above, he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment, he appointed the foundations of the earth, Prov. viii. 27—31.

The child that is born to us, is no other than "the Mighty God." This Lord in the beginning laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of his hands: they shall perish, but he remains, as a vesture he shall fold them up, and they shall be changed; but he is the same, and his years shall not fail, Heb. i. 10—12. The honours they pay him in heaven are upon this head. The apostle John had much the same vision with the prophet Isaiah. The angels about his throne are crying out, "Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty;" and what they add to it,

"who is, and was, and is to come," determines the application of the titles, that "these things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him," Isa. vi. 3; Rev. iv. 8; John xii. 41. They cast their crowns before his throne, saying, thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour, and power, for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are, and were created. This is said of him, who upholds all things by the word of his power, and who, having by himself purged our sins, for ever sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, Heb i. 3. The characters are conjoined, he is the head of the body the church, the beginning, he is before all things, and by him all things consist, Col. i. 17, 18. He that has ascended into heaven, and descended, has gathered the winds in his fists, and bound the waters in a garment, and established all the ends of the earth, Prov. xxx. 4. In the last act of resignation we commit the keeping of our souls to him, as a faithful Creator. It may be said of him in the whole revelation of the gospel, "is not he thy Father who has bought thee, has not he made thee and established thee?" Deut. xxxii. 6.

2. He is manifested as the object of universal worship. This flows from the former as a practical inference: let us worship and bow down before the Lord our Maker. He has made of one blood all nations of men that dwell on the face of the earth, and determined the times before appointed, and fixed the bounds of their habitation, that they might seek him, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us, Acts xvii. 26, 27.

This argument is more pressed in the gospel than in any other dispensation; as the apostles told those at Lystra, We are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you, that ye should turn from these vanities to the living God, who has made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein: who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways; Acts xiv. 15, 16; but now in this revela-

tion, he shows them what a violence they offered to their own principles: though the gospel does not give them their notions of God, yet it works and rules them. Their opinion that he is the author of all things, passes for nothing; it does them no good till a true religion sets it home; for "none of them saith, where is God my maker, who gives songs in the night?" Thus we come to be directed in our worship: and therefore the Ephesians, who were superstitious enough, being keepers of the image that fell from Jupiter, are said to be not only without Christ, aliens to the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, but without God in the world. Though they pretended to worship him, their notions were either false or feeble; their belief in God as the supreme cause, and the last end, was was totally disabled. These truths lay in their minds as in a hospital, inactive and impotent. They could not worship him even as a Creator. It is said of the Thessalonians, that upon the preaching of the gospel, they turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come, 1 Thess. i. 9, 10. Though these notions seem to be scattered over the world, yet there was a time when the Galatians knew not God, but did service to those who by nature were no gods; Gal. iv. 8; but he is now manifested as the hearer of prayer, that unto him all flesh may come.

He that came in the flesh has made known himself as the object of adoration. We have a prophesy of the happiness that is to flow over all the earth. The ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord, the kindreds of the nations shall worship before him, for the kingdom is the Lord's and he is the Governor among the nations. All that be fat upon the earth, shall eat and worship, and they that go down to the dust, shall bow before him, Psal. xxii. 27—29. The 72d is called a Psalm for Solomon, but you will by the characters be convinced, that a greater than Solomon is mentioned there. "All kings shall fall

down before him, all nations shall serve him; his name shall endure for ever, his name shall continue as long as the sun; men shall be blessed in him, and all nations shall call him blessed."

3. Another manifestation that we have of God, and in which the gospel exceeds all that went before, is that he is a *lawgiver;* from him we receive the rules of our duty. He has shown what is good, and what he requires of us. Some degree of this light was given to the heathen. They having not the law, were a law unto themselves. They had the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing them witness, and their thoughts in the mean while accusing or excusing one another, Rom. ii. 14, 15. It was an aggravation of their sin, that "when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, but became vain in their imaginations."

But what are all these discoveries, if compared to the grace of God, that brings salvation, teaching to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world? Tit. ii. 11, 12. The Jews had such a manifestation for several ages, as had not been given to any other nation. "He sent his word unto Jacob, his statutes and judgments unto Israel." But in these last days, since he has spoken to us by his Son, the way of God is taught more perfectly. The law is not made void through faith; but as he came in person to fulfil it, so his gospel is given to establish it. It is only a God who can give a command. This character is united to those that contain the greatest glory. "The Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our King and he will save us." And therefore,

If you find that he who was manifest in the flesh, took upon him this title, (as the Jews said, "he made himself equal with God,") this, without a Divine nature, would have been arrogance in him, as much as any other man. We must confound the characters of Christ, and antichrist, if they are both creatures. It stands as the glaring impiety of the latter, that he exalts himself above all that is called God, or is wor-

shipped; that he sits in the temple of God, giving out himself that he is God." He makes laws for conscience, and does that which is peculiar to the Deity. And if the great Redeemer did so too, nothing could take off the charge of blasphemy, but a supposition that he was truly God. And thus did the Apostles declare him. Peter tells Cornelius of their preaching peace by Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. Paul was "not without law to God, but (ενομος Χριστω,) under the law to Christ, 1 Cor. ix. 21. Thus he made his approach to him at first, "Lord, what wilt *thou* have me to do?" This is language that ought not to be used to a creature; and you may observe, that he said it after he had inquired who this Lord was, and received his answer, "I am Jesus of Nazareth whom thou persecutest." He resigns himself to this person with the same unreserve as David did, "Lord, I am thy servant, I am thy servant." It is as much as if he had said, "I will hear what God the Lord will speak." Agreeable to this is the style of the Redeemer; he tells Ananias of Saul, "He is a chosen vessel unto *me*, to bear *my* name before the gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel." Ananias comes to him with that message, "Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus that appeared to thee in the way as thou camest, has sent me that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost." We are told in this place, that the Lord who sent him was Jesus. Compare this with Acts xxii. 14, where you find the same story, and there it is, "The God of our fathers has chosen thee, that thou shouldst know his will, and see the just one, and hear the voice of his mouth; and now, why tarriest thou? wash away thy sins, and be baptized, calling on the name of the Lord." What Lord? You read afterwards, "I saw *Him* saying unto me, make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem, for they will not receive thy testimony concerning *me*."

It is with this mixture of characters, some relating to the human nature and some to the Divine, that he repeats the story to king Agrippa. As he there saith,

he received his mission immediately from Christ himself, who spake thus to him, "I will make thee a minister and a witness of the things that thou hast seen, and of those things in which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the gentiles to whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, to give them remission of sins, and an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in *me*." Christ undertook to deliver him from the people, and with regard to that promise the apostle saith, "Having obtained help from *God*, I continue to this day." He that thus far helped me, is the same God who said that he would deliver me. How would they go upon a design of opening people's eyes, and turning them from Satan, if it was not a "God who caused them to triumph, and made manifest the good savour of his knowledge by them in every place?" 2 Cor. ii. 14.

4. The gospel gives us a manifestation of the great God under the character of a *Judge*. This agrees with those sentiments that have left some tincture of religion all over the world. The heathen have their inward fears of a judgment to come. Conscience witnesses to this, according to its office; for it is the candle of the Lord searching into the innermost parts of the belly. And yet this opinion that mankind believes in general, is brought in among those that we never could have without a particular revelation, that God is Judge of all, and Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant; and the blood of sprinkling speaks better things than the blood of Abel. Those two principles seem to be rivetted in us; idolatry has not choked them, that "it is appointed to men once to die, and after that the judgment."

Now, he that performs this work must be a God. The question is not, whether he that sits upon the throne, will not appear in our nature; but his capacity to go through the grand inquest, must arise from another nature. As the Son of Man, he might be pure, "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from

sinners;" but this could not furnish him with the knowledge of the secrets of all hearts. And therefore, though he is like the sons of men, yet he speaks to his people in the language of the great God, "I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am he who searches the hearts and reins, and I will give to every one of you according to your works, Rev. ii. 23. It may be said of such a one, great is this Lord, and of great power, and his understanding is infinite. If we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, there to receive what we have done in the body, whether it be good or evil, it argues the highest perfection in him, 2 Cor. v. 10.

The Jews could never conceive that an ability to judge the world was separable from the Divine nature. None but He who formed the spirit of man within him, is capable of searching the heart and the reins. The Lord God is the Judge of the earth; he that planted the eye, he that formed the ear. Our God shall come, and not keep silence. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth that he may judge his people. The heavens shall declare his righteousness, for God is Judge himself. Hear, O my people, and I will speak, I am God, even thy God, Psal. xciv. 2. 9; l. 3—7. Thus the Jews were obliged to think; and can we suppose that the gospel has committed the supreme judgment to one who has not infinite perfections? Did their dispensation under the Old Testament proclaim, and that so truly, that "God was Judge of all?" And does ours under the New, by placing it in the hands of the Son, make it to be the work of a creature? Must we say that the Jewish religion over-rated the matter, and that the Christian shows us a great deal less will do than we were taught to imagine before? That though they used to think that nothing beneath the Divine nature was fit for the judgment-seat, yet we find that a mere titular god will do well enough for the greatest solemnity that ever was performed? What sense then must we put upon those words, "I saw a great white

throne, and Him that sat on it; from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them?" Rev. xx. 11, 12. I cannot but think when he speaks of this mighty person, he means the same whom we read of in the next verse, "I saw the dead, small and great, stand before *God.*" Though he is called the Son of Man, when he enters upon the judgment, yet he is then said to come "in the glory of the Father."

5. God is manifested to us as one whom we have dishonoured; the offended party. All flesh has sinned and come short of the glory of God. This is the voice of all true religion; and thus he is discovered in and through a Mediator. Behold, saith he to the Jews, I send an angel before thee to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not, for he will not pardon your transgressions, for my Name is in him; but if thou shalt indeed obey his voice, and do all that I speak, (you see how these are mingled and wove together,) then will I be an enemy to thine enemies, and an adversary to thine adversaries, for mine angel shall go before thee, Exod. xxiii. 20. This he repeats, "I will send an angel before thee, and I will drive out the inhabitants." I take the promise to be the same, when he saith, "*My* presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." No less than this would satisfy Moses, for his answer is, "If *thy* presence go not with me, carry us not up hence, (they could take up with no lower than a God,) for wherein shall it be known here, that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? is it not in that *thou* goest with us?" What he calls his angel in one edition of the promise, he calls his presence in another. The prophet brings both these terms together, "In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence, (he that was always before him, daily his delight,) saved them, he bare them, and carried them all the days of old," Isa. lxiii. 9. This angel they must obey, and not provoke; but they did provoke

him when they refused to go into the promised land. "They tempted the Lord saying, Is the Lord, (is Jehovah,) among us or not?" He calls this "the day of provocation, and the day of temptation in the wilderness." Then they provoked him, or they provoked his angel, contrary to the rule that had been given them. This in the New Testament is called "their tempting of Christ," 1 Cor. x. 9. And we are told, that "Christ is a Son over his own house, whose house we are, if we hold fast the confidence and rejoicing of our hope firm unto the end," Heb. iii. 6. We are not to use him as they did; when we should just go into the promised land, give way and fall back; but hold on our hope unto the end. "For the Holy Ghost saith, To-day if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." Whose voice? the voice of God, saith the psalmist, "The great God, the great King above all gods, who has the strength of hills in his hand." The voice of Christ, saith the apostle. Judge then, by comparing spiritual things with spiritual, whether or not he who was manifest in the flesh is not the God of Israel.

We see that God who is a consuming fire, becomes conversable by appearing in our nature. Disobedience to him, as the light that came into the world, is the great condemnation; which shows the importance of his name. If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins; he that believes not is condemned already; the wrath of God abides on him, John iii. 18, 36. And is want of duty to a creature so very dangerous? Must it be a damning thing that we fail in our respect to one who is not God? I look upon that as the greatest abomination which the Papists have brought into their religion, that a contempt of the Pope, or disobedience to his laws, is a higher crime than blasphemy. And what is it that makes their notion so horrible, but the infinite distance of a poor sinful man from the supreme God? If he was really as great and good as he declares himself, he might demand all this homage. And shall we suppose the same reproach upon Christi-

anity itself? Shall it be more dangerous to refuse Christ Jesus, than to violate a righteous law? Is the main sin of which the Holy Spirit convinces the world, their not believing on him? John xvi. 9. Is it this that binds all our other guilt upon us? And is not he a God whom we thus distinguish? if not, we are guilty of serving the creature more than the Creator.

6. When God manifests himself, it is as the Author of our reconciliation. He has a desire to the work of his own hands; without this discovery all the rest had been in vain. It is to no purpose that he is our Creator, if by breaking his law we have reduced things to such an extremity, that he that made us will have no mercy on us, and he that formed us will show us no favour. He is our Lawgiver, but that raises in us no other than dreadful expectations; for "as many as are under the law are under the curse, because it is written, cursed is every one who continues not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them," Gal. iii. 10. As he is our Judge, we are filled with the terrors of the Lord. There is a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation; but in this revelation, "the love and kindness of God our Saviour towards man has appeared."

Now, he that makes this discovery, can be no other than a God. He made known his resentment, and did it in a way suitable to his majesty. "Who knows the power of thine anger? according to thy fear, so is thy wrath!" and from him the day-star on high is to shine forth. He employed his messengers in all ages to give notice of this salvation. Prophets, and kings, and righteous men have foretold what should happen in the fulness of time. And "He who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake unto the fathers in times past by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by his Son." What was there in this Son more than the other messengers, if we are not to consider him as a God? It is the message that we are chiefly concerned in; the

thing itself that is brought, and not the persons that brings it: so that it is the same to us, whether it comes by a shepherd or a king, by a man or an angel. But when he tells us of speaking by his Son, it is plain we are called to admire not only the doctrine but the preacher, who "is the heir of all things, the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person." To this agrees what our Lord saith in the parable, that a king sent to his subjects one servant, and him they shamefully entreated; again he sent others, whom they wounded, and stoned, and killed; at last, he said, "I will send to them my Son." The demand of their allegiance took its value from the king himself, to whom they owed it, not from the quality of men that brought it. But when the son came, they were to consider not merely what he said, but who he was. This, say they, is the heir; he is a party in the claim, therefore come let us kill him.

If there was not the same regard due to Christ that there is to the Father, we should be no gainers by his coming. John the Baptist might have done as well. God could have told us all by him that he did by Jesus, and might have conveyed the same power of working miracles to the one, that was so surprising in the other; but speaking to us "by his Son," is taking a way that is infinitely above all the rest. Others are said to speak on earth, and he, as distinct from every one besides, alone speaks from heaven. "No man has ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man who is in heaven," John iii. 13. In other cases the message gave dignity to the man. Nothing higher could be said of a prophet, than that the word of the Lord was with him. Jeremiah was a child, Amos a gatherer of sycamore fruit, but they were ennobled by the word they came with, because it was not their own; they had received it from God. But in this case the message takes a value from the person that brings it. It does not give him his dignity, but rather supposes it. It is to be taken for granted, that he is "the

brightness of the Father's glory;" if he was not that, the dispensation that he filled would not have exceeded all the rest; but being so, he did *by himself* purge away our sins.

He preached righteousness and salvation in another way than we do. The word of reconciliation is committed to us, but we send people to him as he invited them to himself. "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink;" "in him was life, and the life was the light of men." John the Baptist was a burning and shining light, yet "he was not that light" in the more eminent sense of the word, but only "sent to bear witness of that light;" for Christ "is the true light that lightens every man who comes into the world." These things show us, that he of whom they are spoken, can be no other than the true God. All the revelation of the Bible places him in that view. We are taught to regard him as such; to believe in him, to come to him, and to rest our souls upon his righteousness and strength.

7. God is manifested to us as the author or contriver of that righteousness in which we are justified. Here the light of nature fails us; the world with all their wisdom knew not God. They had apprehensions that he made them, ruled them, and would judge them; nay, "he left not himself without witness" to his mercy, "giving them rain and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness." They found his bounty in this world, and had some loose and general hopes of meeting it in another; but the way how this should be brought about with glory to his justice, was a "wisdom hid from ages and generations."

Now, by the gospel we are not only told, that God is "reconciling the world unto himself," but the method into which he has thrown the whole design, lies open to our faith and love; that it is "in Christ Jesus, not imputing our trespasses to us, but having made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, we are made the righteousness of God in him." It is here alone we can learn what security he has given to the

honour of his name, and what compass he takes in the diffusions of his love. "Him has God set forth to be a propitiation for our sins through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare at this time his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believes in Jesus, Rom. iii. 25, 26. The dispensation that shows us all this, is the most fitted to our happiness. What the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, (the impossible of the law, *το ἀδυνατον τȣ̃ νομȣ̃*,) God has brought about by sending his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and by sin (the imputation of it, or the sacrifice that was made for it) has condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law may be fulfilled in us, ch. viii. 3, 4. Under the New Testament we have the best light both into the design that God has formed, and the methods by which he will promote it. "The law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did, by the which we draw nigh unto God." This made the apostle say, he was "not ashamed of the gospel of Christ." The expression contains a great deal more than it opens. He was not ashamed, i. e. he delighted, he gloried in it. No labour could make him weary, no sufferings could make him blush; because this gospel was "the power of God to the salvation of every one that believes;" and that which conveys so noble a title to it is, because, therein the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith," Rom. i. 16, 17.

Here faith sees what it has to trust to, and where the soul must keep relying, doing it over and over again; and that is upon the righteousness of God. This is the name that it often goes by. We are told that the Jews "being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God." This title, the righteousness of God, is to be understood of a righteousness that God has contrived, and God brought in; that the person who gives it

to us is God. That this is the sense of the word, appears from the opposition in which it is placed to a righteousness of their own. What was this but their obedience either to the moral or the ceremonial law? Now, that might be called the righteousness of God, as their zeal for it was a "zeal of God," ver. 2. It is what he had appointed and commanded; nay, he tells them, this should be "their righteousness before the nations of the earth;" but then, it is what themselves brought in. Now "the righteousness of God," which bears the name in this place, is distinguished from theirs, and the difference between them is in nothing else but this, that their righteousness was the work of men, the obedience of creatures, but the other was the obedience of a God. Our Saviour when he died had this before him, as the angel Gabriel tells Daniel, that "the Messiah was to be cut off, but not for himself." Whom was it for then? for those that wanted his benefits, when "he finished transgression, made an end of sin, made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in an everlasting righteousness." This was it that the Jews were ignorant of, and refused to submit themselves unto. They could not take Christ as "the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believes." That which they rejected was the righteousness of God, which none but an infinite nature was capable of giving to the world; and therefore the apostle is very full and particular in describing it. His desire was to be found in Christ, not having on his own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith, Phil. iii. 9. Faith regards it as it stands in itself, and then receives or applies it as belonging to us. What faith depends on is "the righteousness of God; something that an infinite nature has done.

Upon this account, the person who came to save us in the name of the Lord, is called, as no creature can be, "Jehovah our righteousness; Jer. xxiii. 6; that is an incommunicable title, which God never gave to another. "Thou alone whose name is Jeho-

vah, art the most High over all the earth," Psal. lxxxiii. 18. There are gods many, and lords many, but there is no more than one JEHOVAH; and if He in whom we are justified joins the greatest word that we have in any language with the relation that he bears to us, if he is called "Jehovah our righteousness," it shows that he who made the atonement is God. Under this title, which is all Divine, has he recommended himself to the faith and the joys of his people. "Sing unto God, sing praises to his name, extol him that rides upon the heavens, by his name Jah, and rejoice before him." His riding upon the heavens plainly belongs to those "chariots of God which are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels." And when does he use them? what mighty period do these words refer to? You will see by the next verse, "thou hast ascended up on high;" and for this we are to "extol him by his name JAH." The author of that righteousness in which we are to be found must be a God; one that is fellow to the Lord of hosts, Zech. xiii. 7.

This gave a virtue to all his sufferings, and therefore we read of "the church of God, which he purchased with his own blood," Acts xx. 28. If an angel had come down into our nature, blood would never have been ascribed to him any further than he was man. It was only the human nature that could bleed, and therefore whatever is more than man, was not to endure but to dignify the sufferings. Now, on purpose to let us know, that nothing but a Divine atonement could answer the demands of a Divine justice, we are told that the purchase was made by the blood of God. The blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, is to purge our conscience. And the God of peace brought again from the dead the Lord Jesus Christ, through the blood of the everlasting covenant. Upon this, God's pardoning a sinner becomes an act of equity. The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth from all sin, and therefore he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, Heb. ix. 14; xiii. 20; 1 John i. 7. 9.

8. God is manifest as the author and fountain of those graces by which we are wrought into his image. In order to be happy with him, we must be conformed to him, being renewed in the spirit of our minds, and putting on the new man, which, (κατα Θεον,) according to God, is created in righteousness, Eph. iv. 23, 24. It is impossible that heaven itself should make him glorious, and us blessed, if his nature was full of resentment, and ours of provocation. If two cannot walk together except they be agreed, much less can they live together in the duration of another state; that would only be an eternal broil, an everlasting jealousy. Now, as he has revealed himself to be our lawgiver, so from him we are to derive the whole of that being, that will make us the people of his hand, and the sheep of his pasture.

And the gospel tells us upon this head, that all our religion comes from the only name that is given under heaven among men. That is all along the language of the New Testament. The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ; not barely the revelation, but the conveyance came by him: for as he was full of grace and truth, so of his fulness we have received, and grace for grace. This is the record that God has given to us, eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that has the Son has life, and he that has not the Son of God has not life, 1 John v. 10, 11. It is expressed in such a way as tells us, we can only have it by a mystical union with him. We are in him that is true, even his Son Jesus Christ: this is the true God, and eternal life: in him was life, and the life was the light of men, John i. 4. In him was life, as in a God; for if you take it in any lower sense, it is no more than may be said of a man, or of a worm. But, as he tells us in another place, "as the Father has life in himself, so has he given to the Son to have life in himself; and, as the Father quickens the dead, so the Son quickens whom he will," John v. 26. 21. It may be said of us as to a religious

existence, "in him we live and move, and have our being: as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can we except we abide in him. Without him we can do nothing." When grace is begun or received, Christ is formed in us; he dwells in our hearts by faith. By the union that he has with his people, every principle is maintained, as he tells the Father, "I in them, and thou in me," John xvii. 23. Though he was then going out of the world, he still desires to be in them, which cannot be understood of an external conversation with them. "I have declared thy name unto them, and will declare it, that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them," John xvii. ult. He considers himself in them, though he was to be in heaven, and they upon earth, according to the promise that he had formerly given them; "Because I live, ye shall live also, and in that day ye shall know that I am in the Father, and the Father in me, and I in you." From this the apostle argues an immortality both in our principles and our heaven; if Christ be in us, the spirit is life, and Christ in us is our hope of glory, Rom. viii. 10.

Now, he that sustains these characters can be no other than God. It is "the one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all," Eph. iv. 6. We have a communion with the angels, but are never said to be in them, or to have them in us; whereas, if the expression means nothing but a mutual fellowship, it might well enough be used in that sense. But the word signifies a great deal more; a union, subsistence, and a derivation, that none but the Divine nature can give us. "God dwells in us, and his love is perfected in us. Hereby we know that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. Whoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwells in him, and he in God. God is love, and he that dwells in love dwells in God, and God in him," 1 John iv. 12—16. If there is no more designed by this dwelling in God than our doing what pleases him, we might be said

to dwell in the saints and angels; but the words signify a happiness which none but a God can give. They express something that is peculiar to him, and what would never be affirmed of us with relation to any creature. Therefore when it is said that Christ is in us, it denotes his glory as well as our dependence.

There is no such union with any but a God. We are "born of the incorruptible seed;" this is the same thing with our "tasting that the Lord is gracious." It is a phrase that we often meet with in the book of Psalms, "O taste and see that the Lord is good!" and it is too much to be affirmed of a creature; no finite being is capable of giving us such an experience. Now, what Lord is that whom we have tasted to be gracious, and to whom we must be still coming as to a living stone? who is this that our faith is held to as its object where it fixes, as its fountain where it feeds? who, besides the Supreme Being, can give us the first experience of religion, and call us to a continual dependence upon him? It is too much for any but himself to do it. And yet this Lord, this living stone, can be no other than our Saviour: for he is described afterwards by his lower character, as "disallowed of men; but chosen of God, and precious." From him we have derived the first life, from him we must derive the rest; by him we are living stones, and are built up a spiritual house, 1 Pet. ii. 4, 5.

Our graces are his work, and what does that import but an Almighty arm? David ascribes it to no less a power than what made the world; "Create in me a clean heart, O God." They that have this change are born of God. Who must he be that shall make a "people willing in the day of his power?" Psal. cx. 3. He gave Paul his commission; he sent him "to turn the gentiles from darkness to light." And yet none but that God who caused light to shine out of darkness can shine into their hearts, 2 Cor. iv. 6. He says to his disciples, "My peace I give unto you, not as the world gives, give I unto you," John

xiv. 27. And what was this but omnipotence, a creating the fruit of the lips, peace, peace, a sending out his Word, and healing them? Isa. lvii. 19.

9. God has manifested himself as the great example and pattern of all our holiness. Religion is a likeness to him. This was his command to the Jews, "Be ye holy, for I am holy." He would never direct our thoughts in those unlimited terms, to any but himself. "He that does the truth, comes to the light that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God," John iii. 21. And therefore,

If we find that Christ is proposed as our pattern, in language that only belongs to an infinite being, we shall see that it is in maintenance of his character. It is true, his obedience to the law under which he was made, is the proper example that he has left behind him for us to follow his steps. We are to be followers of him as dear children, and to walk in love, as he has loved us; and that gives us boldness in the day of judgment, that as he was, so we are in this present world, Eph. v. 1; 1 John iv. 17.

But, besides this, our faith regards him as a pattern under a more glorious consideration. Our religion, even in heaven, is a resemblance of him: "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." Like whom? Like the great God. David would not use the language about any other: "As for me, I shall behold thy face in righteousness; when I awake, I shall be satisfied with thy likeness," Psal. xvii. 15. And again, "With thee is the fountain of life, and in thy light we shall see light," Psal. xxxvi. 9. Nor does the apostle speak of any lower person, when he says, "What manner of love has the Father bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God?" though without any variation of the phrase he goes on to tell us, "Therefore the world knows us not, because it knew not him," 1 John iii. 1, 2. It knew not that God, whose sons we are. "Beloved, now we are the sons of God; and when he, (to whom we are thus related,) shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." What does he say

less, than that we shall behold his face in righteousness, and be satisfied with his likeness? If one of these verses contains as much as the other, it means as much. If the words run as high, certainly the sense must do so too. Nay, from these offices of our faith, he goes on to tell us, that "he who has this hope in him, purifies himself, even as he is pure."

Is any but a God to be such a rule and pattern of our religion? Are not these words too much for a creature, "Be ye holy, for I am holy?" Yes, surely: Hannah's observation is eternally true; "There is none holy as the Lord; for there is none besides him." Our Saviour says, "There is none good but One, that is God;" Matt. xix. 17; and yet he himself is called "the Holy One," Act iii. 14. Imitation is one great act of reverence; and therefore when any example below a God is set before us, it is always under qualifications: "Be ye followers of me," saith the apostle, "even as I also am of Christ." But absolute, unreserved conformity, is only to him that made us. Thus we express our homage, as well as our affection, in a way that we dare not use to an angel. "If any man serve me," saith Christ, "let him follow me," John xii. 26.

10. Another manifestation that we have of God is, as he is the author and giver of those joys that are laid up for us in another world. There can be no happiness but what comes from him: "Thou wilt guide me by thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to thy glory. Thou wilt show me the path of life, (as if life were nowhere else;) in thy presence there is fullness of joy, and at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore," Psal. lxxiii. 24; xvi. 11. This made him say, "Whom have I in heaven but *thee?*" He hoped to meet there with an innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, to sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; but none of these could make him blessed. He only regarded his God under that character: "Thou art my portion for ever. The Lord is my portion, saith my soul." And indeed, upon this head, human reason

agrees with the light of the gospel, that no less than an infinite nature can satisfy either the necessity or the desires of a soul. And therefore whoever represents himself as the author of every good and perfect gift, must be either "the father of lights," or an impostor.

Here the question is, whether under this notion our thoughts are not called up to a Mediator. He did not only appear "to abolish death, but to bring life and immortality to light." He made heaven better known than ever it was before. But, besides that, it is his gift as well as his discovery. Our happiness is a being with Christ; that is, being ever with the Lord. He that sits upon the throne shall dwell among them. Upon this authority he speaks: "They are my sheep, and they shall never perish; but I give to them eternal life, and no man shall pluck them out of *my* hand." He adds as a further security, "My father who gave them to me is greater than all, and none shall pluck them out of my Father's hand," John x. 28, 29. If he was to be considered only in his human nature, what he here saith would be no argument. For though the father that gave them to him was greater than all, yet if himself was not so too they might be lost; for it was his own hand that held them. Their protection is not taken from the greatness of the giver, but from the greatness of the keeper. And therefore, in asserting that none shall pluck them out of his hand, he goes upon the ground that is mentioned in the very next words, "I and my Father are one."

Does it only mean one in design, in consent and agreement? that is no more than may be affirmed of any saint or angel in heaven. Every inhabitant there may say, that God and he are one; what God says he approves. But such a oneness is no argument that those creatures can hold fast whatever the Father has given them. The words under this interpretation may be applied to Adam. God and he were one, when he was first put into paradise; there was a full harmony between them. He had a principle of grace

and holiness; the Father that gave him these was greater than all; but yet he could not say, that none was able to pluck them out of his hands; for they were plucked out. Now, if Christ's being one with the Father, does include an ability in himself to keep what is given him, it must be upon the same foundation, that he (as well as the Father) is greater than all; for otherwise what he here saith could not be true. Without this he hath no power, no right to give eternal life.

Consider him in our nature, and this is what he never assumed. When the two sons of Zebedee came with their mother, begging that the one of them might sit at his right hand, and the other at his left in his kingdom, he tells them it was not his to give, but to those for whom it was prepared of his father. So that you see he disclaims even the power of granting preferments upon earth; as man, he did not pretend to this; and therefore, if he who says, "this is not mine to give," talks in another place of giving what is infinitely greater, he must be considered as bearing two natures. He that would not venture to fix a precedence among his people, would never have dared to say, "they shall not perish," if he was not one with the Father, in the greatest sense that the word can bear.

It is the righteous judgment of *God* that renders to every man according to his deeds, Rom. ii. 5, 6. And yet, he that comes quickly has his reward with him, to give every man according as his work shall be, Rev. xxii. 12. 20; and who is this, but he that testified of those things? You have the sense of the church upon that head: "Amen, even so come Lord Jesus." It is plain thus the Jews understood him, and therefore would have stoned him for blasphemy; "because thou being a man, makest thyself God." John x. 33. If he meant no more by these words, "I and my Father are one," than what a modern interpretation amounts to, he might easily have pleaded not guilty. But he rather heightens the provocation, by repeating his pretensions. "Is it not

written in your law, I said, ye are gods? If he called them gods to whom the word of God came, say ye of him whom the Father has sanctified and sent into the world, thou blasphemest, because I said, I am the Son of God?"

He here fixes the great distinction betwixt himself and the whole world, that they were people "to whom the word of God came." He was the only person that brought it. The being sanctified and sent into the world, may be understood in a lower sense of all the prophets; but it is plain he uses them here in a way that is peculiar to himself; therefore he tells them that he does not call himself God in the way that he has called men so, by virtue of an office; no office could make him the Son of God. This title by which he was to be known, signified more than ever belonged to them whom he had called gods. What then does he put it upon? "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not," John x. 37. What are those? The works that his Father commanded? That any good man or prophet might have said; but it is evident, he speaks of those works which none but the Father himself could do; and from hence he concludes a great deal more than a Divine assistance, which God had given to his servants in all ages. And upon this ground he asserts a personal union, "Though ye believe not me, (i. e. my testimony,) yet believe the works, that ye may know and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him;" in me, not as he was in the prophets, and those that used to surprise the world with miracles. And it is plain, the Jews perceived that he spoke of something more than a derived help from the Father, for that they would never have denied him. They knew he was a teacher come from God; for no man could do the works that he did, except God was with him. But they took his words to signify an equality with God; and therefore after all the explications he gave of them, it is observed "they sought again to take him." And this was the only provocation, as it had been before; "they sought the more to kill him, because he said

that God was his own Father, making himself equal with God." And this they pleaded afterwards, "we have a law, and by that law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God," John xix. 7.

It is thus that he speaks to his own disciples, "Ye believe in God, believe also in me;" with an equal faith, the same in kind and in degree. "I go to prepare a place for you, and I will come again, and receive you to myself." The fitting up a happiness for us, and taking us into it, were never understood to be any other than the works of a God. "Thou shalt guide me by thy counsel, and receive me to thy glory. Whom have I in heaven but thee?" And on purpose to establish them in this opinion, he adds, a little while afterward, "No man comes unto the Father, but by me;" but to let them see that he who brings them to the Father is equal to the Father, he delivers himself in such words as must either bear this sense, or we shall charge him with quibbling; "If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also; and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him." They did not understand it of seeing him in his works, but took it for a personal discovery which they imagined had never been given. Therefore says Philip, "Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith to him, have I been so long time with you, and hast thou not known me, Philip?" Yes, he knew him; but what is that to the purpose? Well, "He that has seen me, has seen the Father." Certainly in another sense than we may be said to see him in the wonders that his servants have wrought. The reason he repeats is, "Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself, but the Father who is in me does the works," John xiv. 1—10.

III. We are now to consider that particular *manifestation* of God which the text has led us to, and this is said to be *in the flesh.* Religion is nothing else but the discovery that God has made of himself, a revelation that is given out from him. Take reli-

gion as a doctrine, and it is this revelation exposed; take it as a principle, and it is this revelation implanted, filling the mind, possessing the will, and moving the affections; take it as a practice, and it is this revelation drawn out and returned in duty and love. "It is life eternal to know the only true God." The ways that he has taken to open out himself, and be known to the world, are very different. "God who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken to us by his Son." I will just mention the most remarkable of them; and in these you will see, how the revelation of a God has been as the light of the morning, shining more and more, till it came to a perfect day.

1. He has manifested himself in voices. He used to speak out to the world. Adam and his wife "heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden." Thus he dealt both with good and bad. You find him arguing with Cain, as well as testifying to the gifts of Abel. This way of manifestation gradually expired.

2. He manifested himself by dreams and visions of the night, when deep sleep falls upon men, and slumberings upon the bed; then he opens the ears of men, and seals their instruction, Job xxxiii. 15, 16. This was also without any distinction betwixt his people and his enemies. Thus he came to Abimelech in a dream by night. In like manner he met Laban the Syrian, and conveyed into his heart an awful charge, not to speak to Jacob either good or bad; he rebuked him in the night. Thus he instructed Pharaoh, and terrified Nebuchadnezzar. For "there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and makes known what shall be in the latter days."

3. He used to manifest himself by raising up eminent persons, either as prophets to teach his people, or as saviours to defend them. The revelation was then contracted, not given to mankind in general, but made known to those whom he had chosen. He took this way to bring the children of Israel out of Egypt,

by appointing Moses to be the shepherd of his flock, and putting his Spirit within him. And as it was the encouragement that he gave to Moses himself, "I have known thee by name, and thou hast found grace in my sight;" so he brings it in for his vindication against the envy of Aaron and Miriam. "If there be a prophet among you, I will make myself known to him in a vision, and speak to him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all my house; with him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches, and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold; wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?" Num. xii. 6—8. From hence you see, that what had been the general experience of mankind, came to be more restrained. It belonged to an office, and was not given in common as it used to be. And therefore it is observed, that there arose not a prophet since in Israel, like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face. Of old time, holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

4. He manifested himself in miracles. This was for the conviction of the world. As Moses saith, "Hereby ye shall know that the Lord has sent me to do all these works, and that I have not done them of my own mind." He suspected the incredulity of the people before he took his commission, "They will not believe my voice, for they will say, the Lord has not appeared unto thee." And therefore God ordered him to cast down his rod, which became a serpent, and do it a second time, which restored it into a rod, "that they may believe that the Lord God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob has appeared unto thee." And it is observed, that when Aaron spake the words to the people, Moses did the signs in their sight; "and the people believed, and bowed down their heads and worshipped." Thus "he showed his people the power of his works, that he might give them the heritage of the heathen."

5. He manifested himself in a written law. One

part of it was written with "the finger of God" upon two tables of stone, but these were broken, when the people for whom they were designed had wandered into a superstition of their own. After that, "Moses commanded them a law, even the inheritance of the congregation of Jacob." This he did according to the pattern showed him in the mount, for "he was faithful in all things to him who had appointed him." Thus the prophets, whom he raised up afterwards, were directed and filled; that which they regarded was "the Spirit of Christ that was in them," and the testimony that this gave to our salvation. "All Scripture was given by inspiration of God," 1 Pet. i. 11; 2 Tim. iii. 16.

6. He manifested himself by several ordinances. He gave them statutes and judgments by which they were to live. He was known in their palaces for a refuge. They went up to the place that he had chosen, to the testimony of Israel.

7. He also manifested himself by appearing frequently to them. "The angel of his presence saved them." And this he did at any remarkable turn of life, when the concerns of his glory and their happiness made it needful. Thus we read, that the "Lord went his way, as soon as he had left communing with Abraham." Jacob takes notice that "God Almighty appeared to him at Luz, in the land of Canaan." This was at a time that might be called the dead of night, the gloomy part of life, when he left his father's house, because of his brother's anger. After this, upon his return, "he had power over the angel, and prevailed. He found him in Bethel," Hos. xii. 4. So again, when the famine had starved him out of Canaan, the country that was promised to him and his seed after him, at Beersheba, on the confines of the land, "God spake to Israel in the visions of the night," Gen. xlvi. 2. He sent an angel to fetch them out of Egypt. He guided them in the way, and was an adversary to their adversaries. This was no other than he who "rejoiced in the habitable parts of the earth," Prov. viii. 31; and by that gave out

some sketches of the future incarnation. It was the dawn of our more glorious day. This "angel of the covenant whom they delighted in," was in the last days to "come to his temple," and therefore discovered himself to them before-hand, that "the twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night," might still keep looking on, to the great hope of Israel, Mal. iii. 1; Acts xxvi. 7.

8. The last and greatest manifestation that we have of God is *in the flesh.* What that body was by which he became visible, and made his appearance so often in the Old Testament, is a thing undescribed; and therefore to guess at it, is only to wander in the mazes of our own folly. It is certain, this way of coming in the flesh exceeds all the rest; it answers nobler ends, is better for us, and kinder in him. These sundry times and divers manners in which he spake to the fathers, make so many glorious parts in history; but his speaking to us in these last days "by his Son," is distinguished from all that went before. The way of doing that, was more suitable to our happiness and his own dignity, upon several accounts. It is more familiar, and less frightful; more certain and convincing; more expressive of our union to him; more capable of working out the great atonement; more instructive in the matter of duty; it gives a greater assurance of our happiness; and on the whole, is a nobler argument of the Divine love.

1. His being manifest in the flesh, exceeds all the other manifestations that he gave of himself, as it is more familiar. "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold thy king comes unto thee; he is just, and having salvation, lowly, and riding upon an ass," Zech. ix. 9. Whatever we may think of voices and thunders, and a doctrine discharged in the artillery of heaven, the people who were under that dispensation did not like it. At the giving of the law, the angels attended in their places, and were distributed into their several offices. Now, though these were a noble testimony to the law itself, and an argument for the people to hear and

fear, yet the terror it put them into was by no means desirable. They come to Moses, and beg that he would go into the mount, that they might hear no more these mighty thunderings. Nay, so dreadful was the sight, that "Moses himself said, I exceedingly fear and quake," Heb. xii. 21. And if *he* could not bear it, who had seen the Lord, and was prepared for a correspondence with all that glory, well might it scatter a confusion among the children of Israel.

Thus was God manifest then, and they might take it for a humbling of himself, to behold the things that were done among them; but we have his love in a more familiar way, in that he "sent forth his Son, made of a woman, and made under the law. The word was made flesh and dwelt among us. We are not come to the mount that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words, which they that heard intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more; but to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, whose voice then shook the earth."

And if it was not a God who came into that tabernacle of flesh, and took our nature into union with himself, we cannot regard it with so much veneration as we must have done those thunders and voices that published the Horeb edition of the law. He was certainly at mount Sinai among his thousands of angels, and is it not the same God who took upon him our nature? if not, we are no gainers by this dispensation. What was there in him more than a prophet? His working great miracles, giving a better account of religion, is not all, for that any other person might have done; nay, in each of these his own disciples exceeded him, as he foretold they should. "He that believes on me shall do greater things than I do, because I go to my Father," John xiv. 12. From them the world has a more complete edition of the gospel than they had from him. He left many things unsaid, but the Spirit whom he would send should "lead them into all truth," John xvi. 13. And therefore, what was there in him, more than in them? you

can put it upon no less than the greatness of his person. The law was given "by the disposition of angels," being "ordained by angels in the hands of a mediator," that is, Moses. Our gospel comes with none of this solemnity, but with quiet preaching; "the voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, and make his paths straight." Thus it began with the ministry of John the Baptist, or rather that was preliminary to it; for this great salvation "began to be spoken by the Lord Jesus, and was confirmed by those that heard him."

Now, where was the force of the apostle's argument, "If the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, that began to be spoken by the Lord Jesus?" It is apparent, he considers Jesus as a much greater speaker than the angels; and it is certain nothing of that could be seen in his conversation, for he was much "lower than the angels." They who believed not, were far from taking him for one above them, or preferring his words to what was said by an angel; so that, if there is any conclusion at all in his argument, it must be drawn from an unseen glory in the speaker, something that was not known to them that despised him, and only evident to those whose eyes God had opened; and so it proved; "he was in the world, and the world was made by him, but the world knew him not," i. e. they knew him not as their Maker. In other respects they were no strangers to him. They knew him to be of Nazareth, of a poor parentage, of a mean kindred; but they knew him not in his main character. Our Saviour observes both these; for his enemies argued, "We know this man whence he is; but when Christ comes, no man knows whence he is;" to which he answers, "Ye both know me, and ye know whence I am; but he that sent me is true, whom ye know not; but I know him, for I am from him," John vii. 27—29. "He came to his own, and his own received him not," i. e. the Jews. They

marvelled at his words, and were astonished at his doctrine; they admired his miracles; but this was not receiving him. That contained a great deal more than believing him to be a good man, a prophet mighty in word and deed. Now, "to them that received him, he gave power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe," on what? "on his name." Though their faith might be led on by his doctrine, and by his miracles, (never man spake like this man, he did the works that no other could do,) yet it fixed on his unseen character.

They believed *on his Name,* what he was in himself. And what is that? "The *Word* was made flesh, and dwelt among us." Others might know that as well as they, they saw him to be flesh, and they knew his abode, but they were ignorant of the antecedent majesty; and therefore those believers were enabled to look through. "We beheld his glory (the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." Those last words belong to the first, and may be considered apart from the parenthesis that breaks the sentence. He tells us that this "Word dwelt among us, full of grace and truth." The character fixes upon him as Mediator. With that furniture he was an inhabitant in our world; but this does not tell us all that he was. There is something else that believers saw in him, besides the holiness of his person, and the qualifications for his work. They saw his glory, and what was this? "the glory as of the only begotten of the Father." The world had never before such a discovery of a God. God had often been with a person, but not in one; and therefore he is called, "the image of the invisible God;" the most familiar manifestation that the world can have of him. He is "the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image or character of his person." Upon which he saith to Philip, "He that has seen me, has seen the Father."

How familiar was this, that he should be *Immanuel,* God with us! not merely by a spiritual presence, for that he was before, and that he is more

eminently now, but he who was with us is God. This way was the most agreeable to our weakness. God's appearance used to be dreadful. Jacob makes a wonder of it, "I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved." Manoah, as soon as he saw the angel of the Lord, (which shows what sort of an angel he took him for,) cries out with all the pain of admiration, "We shall surely die, because we have seen God." The manifestation that he makes of himself in the flesh, is without all this dread. Here our eyes may see, and our hands may handle of the word of life, as that apostle saith who used to lie in his bosom: "For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us." What he calls "the word of life" in one verse, he calls by the name of *life* itself in the other, which shows that they both must be understood of a person; of him whom they had looked upon, and whom their hands had handled. This eternal life was "with the Father," as the author of eternal life, and yet he was "manifest to us in the flesh." He came into one of our tabernacles, those houses of clay whose foundations are in the dust, and are crushed before the moth.

2. This manifestation of God is most certain and convincing. Many times they could not tell whether it was God who spake to them or no. The prophets themselves were frequently obliged to take up with the after-grounds of assurance, "Then I knew it was the word of the Lord," Jer. xxxii. 8; Zech. xi. 11. Elijah saw a mighty earthquake, but "the Lord was not in the earthquake." He heard a strong rushing wind, "but the Lord was not in the wind," 1 Kings xix. 11. He expected to have found him in both these; but we are sure that "the Lord God of Israel has visited and redeemed his people. Επεσκεψατο και ἐποιησε λυτρωσιν; he has looked upon them, and wrought out a salvation, Luke i. 68.

What sort of a body he had for the apparitions under the Old Testament, we cannot tell; but now he

is "made of a woman." He did not take upon him a shadow, an airy covering, a human figure, which he might throw off as a looser garment, after it had served a particular occasion; but he was in all things tempted as we are, κατα παντα καθ' ὁμοιοτητα, according to the whole of that likeness that he had to his people. Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he likewise himself was a sharer with them; for it became him in all things to be made like unto his brethren, Heb. ii. 14. 17.

The primitive churches were guilty of an error upon this head, against which the apostles urged with a particular vehemence. His Divinity was not then the main question, so much as the truth of his humanity. That he who came about their salvation is the mighty God was easily believed, because it is only under those notions that we conceive him equal to the design. But the difficulty lay in this, that an infinite nature should take a finite one, that he should be a child, live as we did, and die as we shall. This was the great stumbling-block; and therefore he is called "an antichrist, who denied that Christ was come in *the flesh*." Not but that they would own that he had been among them, there were witnesses enough of that; but they thought he could not have the reality and truth of our nature; in opposition to which those expressions were used, "we have looked upon, and our hands have handled the word of life." There is no handling of a God, or seeing him who "dwells in that light to which none can approach." As the word of life, he could not be the subject of such a conversation; but the meaning is, that he who bore this Divine character came down into a lower, and so dwelt among us.

This is not like those transient visions under the Old Testament. When the angel came the second time upon Manoah's prayer, and had given him instructions what he should do to the child, and at last went up in the flame, it is said, that "the angel of the Lord did no more appear to Manoah and his wife." He had done with that message. These hasty

revelations that were carried on in a way of flight, left the people at great uncertainties; but now it is observed of the Lord Jesus, that "he went in and out amongst us."

They might well say, "we believe, and are *sure* that thou art that Christ the Son of the living God." And to this profession our Lord himself gives his testimony, "I have given unto them the words that thou gavest me, and they have received them, and have known *surely* that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou hast sent me," John xvii. 8. Indeed this is what themselves had told him a little before, "now we are *sure* that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee; by this we believe that thou camest forth from God," John xvi. 30, In what sense? as a good man, as a mighty prophet? No, but as the one that had an existence with God, and the existence of a God, as one that knew all things. Now, why should they say that of him, when he had expressly told them, that there was an hour that none of the angels knew, no not the Son, but the Father? He plainly confesses a nature that was not omniscient, and therefore if they did not believe that he had another that was, they would never have been so loose and extravagant in their zeal as to tell him, that he knew all things.

3. This manifestation in the flesh, is most expressive of our union to him. We may call him our God, as he is the author of salvation, and as he gives us the desires that are breathing after it, and all the preparations that relate unto it; but that he might abundantly show us how much he is ours, he is "bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh;" he becomes "the seed of the woman." It was not enough that he all along designed to condemn sin, but he does it "in the flesh;" so that by this means, he has all the names that signify the dearest relations. He is "our Lord and Master;" we call him so, and we say well. We are "under the law to Christ." He is our friend, our shepherd, he lays down his life for the sheep. He is our father. "His goings forth have been of old from

everlasting." "Here am I," saith he, "and the children whom thou hast given me." But on purpose to show us this union in all the happy forms that can be, he becomes also our brother, "the first-born among many brethren." As the ground of an union with him in covenant, he admits us to one in nature. He did this on purpose to be the foundation of our hope in that promise, "I in them, and thou in me." He became the Son of man, that we might be "the children of God."

4. This manifestation in the flesh, was for the working out of a great atonement. The apostle gives that as the reason, why it "behoved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, making reconciliation for the sins of the people," Heb. ii. 17. This used to be carried on in a way that could have no other value, than as it was typical of something better than itself; I mean, by sacrifices and burnt-offerings. For though he told us, that without shedding of blood there could be no remission, yet it was impossible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins, Heb. ix. 22; x. 4.

Now, in order to answer what this could only point to, there must be an incarnation. Satisfaction was *το ἀδυνατον τȣ νομȣ*, the thing that the law could not do, and this God brings about by sending his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, Rom. viii. 3. Sending him in those slighter and thinner forms under the Old Testament would be sufficient for an instruction to his people, and for a rescue from their enemies. This would do for "a captain of the Lord's host," as he calls himself to Joshua, but it could not avail to a propitiation; there must be the shedding of blood for that; and therefore, saith he, when sacrifice and offering thou wouldst have no longer, a body thou hast prepared me. That opinion of the ancients, which the apostle John opposed with so much warmth, that Christ was not come in the flesh, ought to be resisted in all the vehemence that he used, because it

destroyed the foundations. If he was not man, he could not die; and if he did not die, there was no atonement made, we are yet in our sins. If there was none of this precious blood, we are still unredeemed; and though he is "the Lion of the tribe of Judah," he is not that "Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world."

5. By this manifestation in the flesh, he gave the best instructions in the matter of our duty. Had he never revealed himself otherwise than in the more glorious forms that were used of old, we should have admired his person, but not understood so much of his errand. He was therefore to teach us after the manner of men, to bear the weakness and prejudice of his disciples, and to answer their objections. Job complained that every admonition from God lost its usefulness by its majesty, and therefore thinks he could have learned better, if the terror of the Lord had not made him afraid. "Let not his fear terrify me, then would I speak, and not fear him; but it is not so with me; I am troubled at his presence, when I consider, I am afraid of him; for God makes my heart soft, and the Almighty troubles me." And therefore Elihu tells him, "Behold, I am according to thy wish, in God's stead. I am formed out of the clay; behold, my terror shall not make thee afraid, neither shall my hand be heavy upon thee."

This expression of his shows us what sort of a dispensation would be best, where we could have God's wisdom delivered without his majesty, as we have from one "in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," Col. ii. 9. Job knew that his Redeemer should stand in the latter days upon the earth; he shall stand and feed in the strength of the Lord, and in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. The man that is to be the peace shall do this. He was to feed his flock like a shepherd, carry the lambs in his arm, take them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young, Mic. v. 4, 5; Isa. xl. 11. The manifestation of a God in the flesh, gives the easiest conveyance to all instructions. When he revealed

himself in that cloud of thick darkness by which he took possession of Solomon's temple, the priests could not enter in to minister because of the stifling glory. Though they admired so great a token of the Divine presence, yet it rather kept them out of his service than helped them in it. But when God came down among us in the person of a Redeemer, religion was both greater to our minds, and sooner in them. "I have manifested unto them thy name, and I have given unto them the words that thou gavest me, and they have received them," John xvii. 6. 8.

6. This gives us the greatest assurance of our happiness, because he has carried his body up with him to heaven: "thither Jesus our forerunner is for us entered," Heb. vi. 20. When, and how did he enter? In the day of his crucifixion? for that day he was with the converted thief in paradise: or as one that took possession for himself? No, but "as a high priest for ever," with all the materials of a sacrifice about him. "By his own blood he entered into the holiest of all, having obtained eternal redemption for us," Heb. ix. 12. We therefore the rather look for Christ Jesus the Lord, and know that he will change our vile bodies, because he has now such a glorious body, and is able by a mighty power to subdue all things unto himself, Phil. iii. 21.

7. This shows the goodness of God our Saviour towards men. Herein has "God commended his love towards us," in sending his only begotten Son into the world, "that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life," John iii. 16. This might well be called glad tidings of great joy to all people, that to us is born in the city of David a Saviour who is Christ the Lord. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so; let them take a part in the songs of those angels who brought the message, and say, "GLORY to God in the highest, on earth peace, and good will towards men."

IV. The last thing I am to do, according to the disposition that we have made of the words, is to show you how this branch of the Christian religion, viz.

the manifestation of God in the flesh, answers the noble character that is here given of it, as a "mystery of godliness." Under this head there are two parts.

1st. That it is a *mystery;* and,

2dly. That it is a mystery of *godliness.*

I have already considered each of these, as they belong to the gospel in general, and let you see the importance of mysteries in our religion, that they are a suitable object of faith, and indeed the glory of any revelation. Our hearts are comforted in the riches of the full assurance of understanding, and an acknowledgment of the mystery. You have also heard how well Christianity is prepared upon this account to form the minds of men, to direct their choice, to help on their duty, and ensure their happiness; and that without a belief of some things, that reason can neither discover nor comprehend, it is impossible that practical holiness should obtain in the world. It is a doctrine according to godliness. I shall now lay before you those Divine titles as they belong to this particular article of faith, that "God was manifest in the flesh," and let you see both that it is a mystery, and that it is designed to promote our duty and consolation.

1. I begin with the first of these, that it is a mystery; and really there is no need to dispute it. The text is literally true, that "without controversy great is this mystery." This is so far from being a part of the question, that it is therefore denied to be a truth, because it is a mystery. All the objections formed against it are upon this ground: do but bring it down to the management of reason, let it be one of those things that man's wisdom teaches, and we shall have no contradiction of sinners. But as it is among "the deep things of God," which none but the Holy Ghost reveals, it is upon this account that the natural man receives it not, neither can he know it, because it is foolishness to him, 1 Cor. ii. 14.

However, I will lead you through a few particulars that will show, how amazing this contrivance deserves to be in the eyes of all the saints. If God was

manifest in the flesh, then the following oppositions between the two natures were reconciled. And how could men, or angels either, imagine the way, or believe the fact, if an all-comprehending wisdom had not both contrived and revealed it? He that dwells in a light to which none can approach, becomes visible to the world. He who had prepared his throne in the heavens, lives among men. He who is above the derivation of any being from a man, is made of a woman. He who is Lord of all, takes the form of a servant. He who is eternally holy, appears in the likeness of sinful flesh. He whose kingdom rules over all, is a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief! He who is blessed for ever, becomes a curse for us: and he who is the prince of life, is obedient to the death of the cross.

These several wonders are contained in the manifestation that God made of himself in the flesh. And they are all of that nature, that as our reason is never able to find them out, so neither ought it ever to have taken them in, if they had not been recommended by a Divine testimony. They are every one of them incredible, and to us they appear impossible. As none but a God could do them, so none but a God can tell them. It is upon his report alone that we received them.

1. Is it not a mystery that he who dwells in that light to which none can approach, became visible to us? The former part of this character belongs to Christ, as you will see by the context of the verse out of which I have taken it. The apostle charges Timothy to "keep the commandment without spot, and unrebukeable, unto the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which in his times he shall show who is the blessed and only potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords," 1 Tim. vi. 14, 15. There is nothing said of him thus far, but what agrees to the known language of the Bible. And he goes on in a description of the very same person, that "he only has immortality, dwelling in the light which none can approach unto, whom no man has seen, nor can

see; to whom be glory and power everlasting, Amen." It is under this notion that our Lord speaks of the Divine nature, as that which is known and seen by none but himself. "No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him." And again, "Not that any man has seen the Father, save he that is of God, he has seen the Father." The same inaccessible glory does he challenge to himself, that "none knows the Father but the Son, and none knows the Son but the Father," John i. 18; vi. 46; Matt. xi. 27. Now, he was to make the Divine nature in some respects conversable with us. Hence we read of him, that he is the image of God. This description is elsewhere more enlarged, that he is "the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature," Col. 1. 15. Thus the apostle says in that text that will ever contain a fullness of truth, when all the pains that men take to rob and plunder it shall prove in vain, "He is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person," Heb. i. 3. We have "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the person of Jesus Christ," 2 Cor. iv. 6. This was the design of his incarnation, that God and man should again be known to one another. Moses begs of God "I beseech thee show me thy glory;" and receives this for an answer, "Thou canst not see my face; for no man shall see me and live," Ex. xxxiii. 18. 20. How different is the answer that our Lord gives to Philip, who had desired the same thing, "Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us?" Christ does not tell him as it was said to Moses, that he is asking for a thing impossible. No, he represents his own person, as a more familiar publication of the Divine nature than the world ever had before. "If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father, and from henceforth ye have known him, and seen him. He that has seen me has seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, show us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me?" John xiv. 7—10. Who would ever imagine

that we should see, and with eyes look upon, and that our hands should handle the word of life! "For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness and show unto you, that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifest to us," 1 John i. 1, 2.

Moses tells the children of Israel, that there was something in their case which exceeded all the observation of the universe. "Ask now of the days that are past, which were before thee, since the day that God created man upon earth, and ask from one side of heaven unto the other, whether there has been any such thing as this great thing is, or has been heard like it? Did ever people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as thou hast heard, and live?" Deut. iv. 31, 32. This he repeats to their further astonishment, "The Lord talked with you face to face in the mount, out of the midst of the fire." And he puts them in mind of the remark that themselves made upon this occasion; "Ye said, behold the Lord our God has showed us his glory and his greatness, and we have heard his voice out of the midst of the fire; we have seen this day that God does talk with man, and he lives," Deut. v. 4. 24. But all this does not amount to so much as an incarnation; that the word should be made flesh. It was Christ who revealed himself to the Jews of old. He was the Angel of the Divine presence; it was the reproach of Christ which Moses esteemed above all the treasures of Egypt, Heb. xi. 26. It was he who appeared at Horeb in a flame of fire, out of the midst of the bush; but then he was not to be approached. The Lord called unto Moses, "Draw not nigh hither, but put off thy shoes from thy feet." As the angel that went before them, he placed himself within a cloud, from which they were to keep their distance. But when the word was made flesh, they beheld his glory. And what a wonder is it, that he who would not be known any otherwise than in these imperfect revelations, should be "manifest in the flesh."

2. Another thing mysterious in this doctrine is, that

he who has "prepared his throne in the heavens" should dwell among men. The word was made flesh, (και ἐσκηνωσεν ἐν ἡμιν,) and had a tabernacle among us; he was not only our brother, but our neighbour, "rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth." To prepare a throne in the heavens, is the glory of a God. It is one of the highest conceptions we have of him, that the heaven, even the heaven of heavens, is the Lord's, Psal. cxv. 16. Our Saviour takes care to represent it as his place. Thus, when he speaks of the Father before the foundation of the world, he says of himself, I was by him, daily his delight, rejoicing always before him, Prov. viii. 30. And as the evangelist tells us, "The word was with God, and the word was God; the same was in the beginning with God," John i. 1, 2. He had his own seat of government and glory. This he demands upon his return, "Glorify me with the glory that I had with thee, before the world was." "The Son of man ascended where he was before," John xvii. 5; vi. 62. This is what he could never lose, and therefore speaks of his presence and greatness there as a continued thing, an eternal enjoyment; and if it is not to be understood of a nature above what he appeared in, we know not how to make sense of the words. "No man has ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven," John iii. 13. His ascension in our nature was not till some years after this; but what he adds in the next words brings its own interpretation along with it, "The Son of man who *is* in heaven." Was not this enough to confound Nicodemus? If it did not relate to his divinity, the expression would puzzle us more than the account of the new birth puzzled him. For a person who was then with him in a little room, to talk of being "in heaven," might provoke him to say a second time, "How can these things be?"

Now, what a wonder is it that he who lived in the high and holy place that is called eternity, should come in and go out among us! He might have taken our nature in the same way that he now keeps it, placed

it at once in the city and temple of God, never let it come lower than it is at present. He might have made it from the beginning, as it now is, "a glorious body." But the astonishment is, that he should be in the world that was made by him.

The Scripture has told us with what amazement the most eminent persons of two religions have delivered themselves upon this doctrine. The heathen could never believe it, and therefore lay it down as a principle when they speak of their gods, that "their dwelling is not with flesh," Dan ii. 11. And the Jews themselves, to whom it was so often promised, found it hard to be conceived. Solomon had a Divine direction to build a temple, and about this he had used all the pains, and cost, and care, that the world was capable of supplying. And yet when he comes to the solemnity of a dedication, he can scarce believe what he ought not to doubt of. He flies back with a recoil of wonder, "will God in very deed dwell on the earth? Behold the heaven, even the heaven of heavens cannot contain him; how much less this house that I have built?"

That which he found it so hard to apprehend, becomes the report of our gospel. This is the great voice that we have heard out of heaven, saying, "Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them, and be their God," Rev. xxi. 3. That Christ is made of the seed of David according to the flesh; nay, that he was born in the city of David, that there they should find a child;—well might the shepherds say, "Come, and let us go to Bethlehem, and see this *great thing* that is come to pass," Luke ii. 11. 15.

3. Another part of the mystery is, that He who has derived no being from a man should be born of a woman. The apostle argues to the Athenians, that God "needed not any thing, seeing that he gives to us life and breath, and all things," Acts xvii. 25. And we have an equal account of Christ Jesus, that by him all things consist, that he upholds all things by the

word of his power; that in him was life, and that life was the light of men, Col. i. 17; Heb. i. 3; John. i. 4. So that though he took upon him our nature, it was not in such a descent as we have. God speaks of it as his own act, the thing that he would distinguish to the wonder of all ages. "Behold the Lord himself shall give you a sign, a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and they shall call his name *Immanuel*, Isa. vii. 14. This our Saviour mentions as a Divine contrivance; "a body hast thou prepared me." And it is amazing that his title, as the Son of God, is given him upon this account as well as those that are greater. As the angel tells the Virgin Mary, "the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; and therefore that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God, Luke i. 35.

It is as hard for us to conceive how he should be a man, according to this account, as it is how he should be a God. This is as great a difficulty in the history of the gospel, as there can be in its doctrines. And therefore when it is said, that "to us a Son is born, to us a Child is given," the names that he is called by are, "Wonderful, Counsellor, Everlasting Father, and Mighty God;" and he may be called Wonderful, considering the manner how he is born, and the way in which he is given. They that deny his Divinity may, with as much justice do the same by his humanity, unless that expression comes within the reach of their reason, which I own will be ever astonishing to mine. "Now the birth of Jesus was on this wise; when as his mother was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost," Mat. i. 18. A phrase never used before, since the beginning of the world, and never like to be upon any other occasion. If we must have no mysteries in religion, let us begin with razing out this. If faith is to receive no more than wisdom can explain, we may shut up the New Testament as soon as we have opened it; for it will be impossible to get over

an incomprehensible fact that lies in the very mouth of the story.

4. He who was "Lord of all," takes upon him the "form of a servant." This carries the wonder a little deeper. The apostle took care to let Cornelius know this, and therefore wedges it in at the beginning of his discourse. As soon as he had mentioned "peace by Jesus Christ," he adds, "He is Lord of all." This he was originally, "His kingdom rules over all." Thus the wise men inquired after him, "where is he that is born king of the Jews." So the angel foretold; "he shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give him the throne of his father David, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end," Luke i. 32, 33. And lest some people should think this title, "The Son of the Highest," is not ground enough for our adoration, you read what Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, said, at the circumcision of his son: "Thou child shalt be called the Prophet of the Highest; for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways." The angels are his Spirits, and his ministers are a flame of fire; "but to the Son it is said, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom," Heb. i. 7, 8. It was revealed a long while ago, that he should be "the Governor among the nations;" that in the days of those kings who were to dwell after one another in the world, "the God of heaven would set up a kingdom that should not be destroyed." He is called "Messiah the Prince," Dan. ii. 44; ix. 25.

But it was not thus that he took upon him our nature, not with a dazzle or show of this dignity; but "being found in fashion as a man, he took upon him the form of a servant." He made himself of no reputation, (ἐκενωσεν ἑαυτον, he made himself empty,) Phil. ii. 7, 8. He came with none of that fullness that we should have expected, from the mighty things that have been said of him. He grew up as a tender plant,

and a root out of a dry ground. He was subject to his parents, wrought with them, and is therefore called "the Carpenter." He was afterwards, by way of scorn, "a servant of rulers, one whom man despised and nations abhorred;" nay, he was among his own disciples as one that serves. "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." He had not where to lay his head. The people ministered to him of their substance. "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, how that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be made rich," Luke ix. 58; viii. 3; 2 Cor. viii. 9.

5. He who was eternally holy, came in the likeness of sinful flesh. The devils gave him this testimony, "I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God." Thus the Father bare witness of him, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am always well pleased." He had no part in the defilement of our nature; for "though he was in all points tempted as we are," yet sin is excepted. And therefore it is observed, that he was "made sin for us who knew no sin." He did no evil, "neither was guile found in his mouth."

And yet he must appear in the likeness, the resemblance, of such a person as he was not; and not only be charged by God with the guilt of others, but supposed by men to have a guilt of his own. His enemies could say to the judge, "If he was not an evil doer, we would not have brought him to thee." The crimes that he was accused of were of the blackest nature. 1. They were angry that he was a *prophet;* in opposition to this they called him a deceiver. "We know that God spake to Moses, as for this fellow we know not from whence he is." 2. They would not own him as a *priest.* It was brought into his indictment that he said, "Destroy this temple, and I will build it in three days." 3. It was still more provoking, that he made himself a *king;* which title they perverted with a downright falsehood, saying upon this score, that he forbade to give tribute to Cæsar.

And they pushed this with a confidence that showed them to be impenetrable. "If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend; for whoever makes himself a king is an enemy to Cæsar." 4. The heaviest accusation of all, was charging him with *blasphemy*. For this they stoned him, because that he being a man, made himself God; that he said, "God was his Father, thereby making himself equal with God."

Thus they understood the phrase, and he lets them go on in their notion; another exposition of the word would have been a plea for the person. And they insist upon it, "We have a law, and by that law he ought to die, because he called himself the Son of God." Is not here a wonder, that the holy child Jesus should give way to all this reproach, and endure the contradiction of sinners against himself! But thus it must be, otherwise how could the Scriptures have been fulfilled?

6. He whose kingdom rules over all, is "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief," Isa. liii. 3. Angels admire him, and yet he is despised and rejected of men; they hid their faces from him; his own received him not. And such an usage as this was needful, in order to his bearing our griefs, and carrying our sorrows, that the chastisement of our peace might be upon him, and by his stripes we might be healed. Had the princes of this world known him, "they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." Instead of that, they would have kissed the Son lest he should be angry. Kings would have shut their mouths at him. The Jews would have run to him, as the great hope of their fathers, and "the glory of Israel."

But his lot was the reverse of these honours. They denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go. They denied the holy and just one, and desired a murderer to be granted to them. His name was grown so scandalous among them, that he becomes the jest of the multitude, who a little before had admired his miracles, and attended his public entry into Jerusalem. They bantered all

his offices; his prophetical, by throwing a cloth over his face, and then striking him with scorn, "Prophesy, O Christ, who it is that smote thee;" his kingly office, by platting a crown of thorns, putting it on his head, and bowing the knee before him, nay, by inscribing in the capital letters of three languages upon his cross, "This is Jesus of Nazareth, king of the Jews;" and his priestly office is so much their contempt, that they think it expedient that he should die for the people; not in the sense that he designed, but only as a political sacrifice. The very thieves that were crucified with him "cast the same in his teeth: He saved others, let him save himself." Now, he had as much the disposal of his reputation, as he had of his life. As no man could take that away, but he had power to lay it down, and power to take it again, so he could as easily have broken his way through the cloud, and caused light to shine out of darkness. Instead of making himself of no reputation, he could have put on the other characters, as one fairer than the sons of men, the chiefest among ten thousand, altogether lovely, and the desire of all nations.

Now and then he scattered a little of his glory among the rebellious, by which he took off the rugged surface that the priests had laid on. The soldiers went to take him, but instead of returning with him as their captive, they confess themselves to be his. "Never man spake like this man." As he sat in a synagogue at Galilee, the eyes of the whole assembly were fixed upon him, "wondering at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth." This account does not suppose them converts, but only that their better passions were touched and set a boiling. His brethren were amazed, that when he had so much reputation within reach, he had so little in possession. "Depart hence, and go into Judea, that thy disciples may see the works that thou doest: for there is no man that does any thing in secret, and he himself seeks to be known openly: if thou do these things show thyself to the world." But this project instead

of flowing from their faith, was an argument of their unbelief, as the historian tells us, "for neither did his brethren believe on him." And when he went up, it was not "openly, but as it were in secret." What a mystery is this, that he who could have commanded the kingdoms of this world and the glory of them, without bowing to Satan, should find no faith in the earth!

7. It is another mystery, that he who is "blessed for ever," should become "a curse" for his people. These are each of them the language of Scripture, unimproved and undisguised. The apostle distinguishes between the nature that he appeared in, and that which was principal and antecedent. He says that "of the Jews as concerning the flesh, Christ came;" and therefore he must be considered some way or other as abstracted from this flesh, as he is in himself, and that is "God over all, blessed for ever." Of him we read, that he is "made under the law;" and what is that? The same apostle has laid down this maxim without any exception, that "as many as are under the law, are under the curse;" and thus "Christ was made a curse for us." And lest you should have any doubt about this, he shows us, that he became so in a ceremonial or a judicial sense, in the language of that law that was peculiar to the Jews, among whom God had said, "Cursed is every one that hangs on a tree."

He who was daily God's delight, comes to be his abhorrence. "The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all. It pleased the Father to bruise him, and put him to grief." Not for any vileness in his person, or any provocation in his behaviour, but "he suffered the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." "For the transgression of my people he was stricken." God set him forth to be a propitiation for our sins through faith in his blood. And what a mystery is this, that the chastisement of our peace should be upon him! The Jews cried out, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" It is as strange that it should be a sacrifice, as that it should be an entertainment, and yet without this there could be no remission. "Christ

was offered to bear the sins of many." He has appeared in these last days "to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself," Heb. ix. 28.

You know, this is so much a mystery, that the rage which men direct against the Divinity of our Lord, usually falls as heavy upon the satisfaction that he has made. As if people were resolved to go through the whole roll of those dreadful characters; that as they have "trodden under foot the Son of God," i. e. in his person; so they will "count the blood of the covenant an unholy (or common) thing, and do despite to the Spirit of grace," Heb. x. 29. But take away the *Divinity* of our Saviour, and he loses his claim to our reverence. Take away his *atonement*, and we are struck off from our only hope. If he does not live for ever, we have no advocate; and if he did not die for us, we have no plea. It is from the cross, and the sacrifice upon it, that we fill our mouths with arguments. "We have boldness to enter into the holiest of all by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way that he has consecrated for us through the vail, that is to say his flesh," Heb. x. 19, 20.

8. It is another part of this mystery, that the Prince of life should be obedient to "*the death of the cross.*" Any other way of suffering had been more honourable; but it is mentioned as an extreme of duty, the farthest point to which it could go, that "he became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." The apostle does not forget this aggravation of his enemies' malice, "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree." And it is brought in as an evidence how powerful a joy was set before him, that he "endured the cross, and despised the shame," and a shame it was in the language of their law, for he that is hanged is accursed of God, Deut. xxi. 23. Behold and wonder! Might he not say as the church does, "see O Lord, and consider, for I am become vile!" The apostle, who had used it as an argument against the Jews, keeps to the same remark. "His own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree," 1 Pet. ii. 24. All these mysteries

are comprehended in God's being manifest in the flesh.

II. This is a mystery of *Godliness*, and has a happy influence upon all practical religion. People are the better for believing it. Under this head I would desire your attention to the following particulars; that this doctrine is a great argument for our duty to God; it declares the value we have for his revelation; it is the chief ground of our hope; it is evidently the concern of good men; there are no practical inconveniences attending it; and all must own it is a thing very desirable, and to be wished for.

1. This doctrine is a great argument of our duty to God. Though he pleads for worship from the title of Creator, we bow down before the Lord our Maker, because we are the work of his hand, and the sheep of his pasture; yet the more moving persuasion is, that we are not our own, but bought with a price, and therefore should glorify God in our bodies and spirits, which are God's, 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20. The blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, shall purge our conscience from dead works, to serve the living God. Heb. ix. 14. The dignity of that person who was manifest in the flesh, gives a value to all his commands. His name is as ointment poured forth, and therefore do the upright love him. This love of Christ constrains us, (συνεχει ἡμας,) we are drawn to it, and by it, as with a compulsive power, 2 Cor. v. 14.

The light of nature gives only a number of cold and heartless admonitions. It makes discoveries, but it makes no impressions. But "the grace of God," the doctrine that he has published, and by which he is revealed as a God, "teaches to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." It has been indeed an old objection against Christianity, that by setting forth one to be a propitiation for our sins, it took off the care of men about their own duty. This is what the Papists revived at the time of the Reformation, That the throwing away of merit was the impairing

of religion. But that pretence had a sort of universal answer, not only from the learning of ministers, but from the lives of people; their humility, their zeal, their abounding in the work of the Lord, has rolled away the reproach, and been a visible argument, that the doctrine of free grace is a "doctrine of godliness."

2. The belief of God's being manifest in the flesh, is raised upon our value for the revelation he has given us; and denying it, carries the most dangerous conclusion against the best dispensation that ever a people were under. "He that believes not the record that God has given of his Son, makes God a liar." We take it for granted, that the most heavenly rules of worship are contained in the Bible; that this is "given by inspiration of God," as he delivered it by those holy men who were moved by the Holy Ghost.

Now, it is only upon the credit of this book, that we receive the things that man's wisdom teaches not. Had all the writings in the world told us, that the Divine Nature would unite itself with the human, the imagination must have been wild and daring. It is a thing that we could not receive, but upon the witness of God himself. And the only reason upon which we own it is, because He has said it in whom there is no darkness at all. "We speak wisdom among them that are perfect; howbeit, not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world that come to nought. But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory."

We find by experience, that the denial of this doctrine eats as a canker. "Evil men and seducers wax worse and worse." From doubting about one particular article, they go on to deny all mysteries in general. "The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, neither can he know them." The ground of doing this, is the mighty opinion we have of human reason, as if nothing should be admitted that does not bow to that. And it is impossible to indulge that notion

without bearing very hard upon the revelation that God has given; for if reason is the supreme judge, a revelation is needless; people may do without it. And thus revelation must be degraded, and brought down to something beneath itself. If God at any time reveals himself, it must be about those matters that we could not otherwise have known. For if reason could have discovered them, there had been no need of this new light.

Now, if we lay down this principle, that we will receive nothing even from God himself, but what we can comprehend, it supersedes all the business and design of a revelation. It is declaring against it. If the doctrines of the Bible are to be valued by their consistence with the light of nature, they might all have been spared. The Holy Ghost had no need to raise up prophets, and inspire apostles; because they tell us no more than what we either could have known without them, or if we could not, they are for that reason to be rejected; and indeed this consequence that I am speaking of, is no more than what people hasten to. The very notion of a book from God runs low; and when once you have got into a contempt of that, farewell religion. For you must then conclude, that God has given us no rules about the way of our approach to him, but that he continues to suffer all nations to go on in their own ways.

If there is no revelation, there can be no method of worship, but what every one's fancy leads him to; and if there is no worship, we shall live as without God in the world. Thus do the principles of natural religion unravel, when men have wounded that which is revealed. They know not where to stop. These profane and vain babblings increase unto more ungodliness. Our faith in this doctrine, that God was manifest in the flesh, takes into it the whole scheme of duty. We believe it, because it is the word of a God who cannot lie; and in that we go upon this opinion, that he has given us a perfect rule, a complete edition of his mind and will, and has brought

in the better hope by which we now draw nigh unto him.

3. This doctrine is the chief ground of our hope, and without that I am sure there can be no religion. "He that comes unto God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." The devils, and they that dwell with them in the chains of darkness, know the former of these. They believe there is one God; they believe it, and tremble; but their eyes are shut from all hope of an acceptance with him. They have no expectation to please him with the gloomy homage of that world. It is despair that keeps them silent from his praise, and makes them rebellious in every thought about him. But the hope that is laid up for us in heaven brings forth fruit. "He that has this hope in him, purifies himself, even as he is pure," 1 John iii. 3. That which makes us "steadfast, unmoveable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord," is because "we know our labour is not in vain in the Lord," 1 Cor. xv. 58.

Christianity sets our practice in another light than any thing else can do. When a heathen has done his utmost, how can he tell whether God will accept him or no? He must know that the best of his actions are no more than duty. They make no atonement for sin. He sees God is just in the retributions of his providence, and what ground is there to suppose he will not be so in the world of spirits? And if that should happen, where must a man of the brightest character appear? "In his sight shall no flesh living be justified." They knew that mere duty procured no pardon, and therefore ran to sacrifices as their refuge. And the more a man's conscience was awakened, the greater barbarities did he use to make it easy, giving his first born for his transgression, the fruit of his body for the sin of his soul, Mic. vi. 7. Christianity is the only religion that tells us what is become of our sins; that they are laid on him "who knew no sin." Without this there could be no hope; and it is that which

oils the wheels, and makes us like the chariots of a willing people, Cant. vi. 12.

4. This doctrine is evidently the concern of good men, such as work out their own salvation with fear and trembling. I do not speak now of the concern that the learned part of the world will maintain, for the opinions they have read, studied, and professed; but it is of more weight with me, what the humble Christian says, whose religion runs all into practice, who feels what he thinks, and does what he feels. When such a one comes to God by Jesus Christ, who is "the way, the truth, and the life," he uses to refresh his soul with this doctrine, that the Mediator between God and man is equal to both parties, that as he thought it no shame to be equal with man, he thought it "no robbery to be equal with God;" that he is the daysman between us, who lays his hand upon us both, which is an act of umpirage, and can never be done by an inferior, Job ix. 33.

If I tell the serious Christian, that his Saviour is less than the Father; nay, that he is lower than the angels, he rejoices in it, and knows this was "for the suffering of death." Heb. ii. 9. But should I go on and tell him, that he is not God, that he is in no respect equal to the justice which we have offended, the holiness which we have dishonoured, and the mercy to which we must be reconciled, the man is thunderstruck; not so much because he has thought wrong for great a while, but because he knows not how to direct his faith, or which way to turn his hope. He is unhinged for practice. The question is not, "what have I been thinking, but what have I been doing all this while? I have worshipped him who is not infinite; I have depended on him who is not omnipotent; I have run to an everlasting righteousness which never had an everlasting author; my soul has been drawn off from the only living and true God, and has placed its confidence in him who is no more than a creature." The horror of such an argument will be equal to the concern that a person has about his soul.

The more he is in earnest for salvation, the more will he be terrified to have any doubts about the Divine perfections of that "only Name that is given under heaven among men."

But, on the other hand, people who heed no worship, who find their pleasure on God's holy day, who take his name in vain, are watching over the controversy, as an eagle over a carcass; these long to have the foundations destroyed, that there may be no difference, both in time and eternity, between the righteous and the wicked; between him that swears, and him that fears an oath. Men are pleased to see a text in danger of losing either its reputation or its meaning by a criticism; not for a love of the truth, but to gratify their contempt of the whole Bible. They will quarrel with the mysteries of the gospel, that they may be easy under the breaches of the law.

It is plain that the arguments against the Divinity of Christ are admired in a way that some of the authors, I hope, never designed they should be. They have this visible effect; to make the heart of the righteous sad, to strike off the believer from his main hope, and to strengthen the hands of the wicked, to encourage the breaking of God's Sabbaths, the ridiculing of his ordinances, the profaning of his name, and the neglect of his worship. It is easy to see to which side of the question the swearer and the drunkard incline, and how the religion that is pure and undefiled before God and our Father will determine. We may soon know what the Spirit of grace, who mortifies the deeds of the body within us, will persuade us to believe. If any man does the will of God, he shall know the doctrine, John vii. 17. If that is a rule, we shall be able to tell how the cause will issue. You may easily perceive which is the opinion that leads to prayer, and a serious hearing of the word; what is the devout notion, the doctrine that brings us into the presence of God, and what puts the faith of a Christian more upon a certainty.

In one way of talking, a good man knows not what he is doing; he comes to a God, and no God; he is in

a misgiving way of adoration; he worships, and yet he does not. The Scripture has called it worship, but he dashes it with a distinction. He talks of a being who is eternal, and yet had a beginning; of one that is equal with the Father, and yet not self-existent; of an infinite majesty derived from another, to whom he must be infinitely unequal; for there is no medium between a God and a creature. He that is made, cannot be God, but must be one of us; and though he has a greater glory than our nature, yet it must be infinitely lower than the Divine. Into such a hovering uncertain way will this opinion throw us; and those fluctuating thoughts will confound our prayer as much as our meditation. We shall be divided in ourselves, afraid that faith should give a Mediator too little glory, which may be ruinous to us, or give him too much, which may be idolatry in the sight of God.

Upon this you will find that men come to restrain prayer; it is a notion that takes them off their knees. If they are careless, they will not pray, and if they are thoughtful, they dare not; for these nice turns of language of a God by creation, or by office, or by eternal emanations, are what we can better pass upon the world, than upon our own conscience. When we come to worship, we must know in whom we have believed. These hard words may do to talk with, but they will not do to pray with. The terms of our new doctrine are no more in the Bible than those of the old creeds, and will not sound very well in prayer.

5. There is no practical inconvenience in believing that "*God* was manifest in the flesh;" it does no harm to our seriousness in any one article of piety or comfort; it does not alienate a man from the life of God, or make him forsake those assemblies that should be continued because of a day that is approaching. There is nothing irreligious to be concluded from it. If any one says, that this is believing what is unaccountable to human reason, the Christian confesses it, and at least does as much good with a mystery in his head, as another does without one. If it is argued

that he worships three Gods, he denies it both in language and in fact. He avows every consequence that men pretend to plead for by their other schemes; as the unity of the Divine Nature, and the simplicity and supremacy of God. These doctrines are sacred to him, and he professes nothing which he will allow to be inconsistent with them. If men are pleased to call these contradictions, we cannot help it. It is owned that we never could, and never ought to have believed them, had they not been given us in Scripture; and therefore, if there is any overdoing in this case, it is only in the profound deference that we pay to the wisdom and truth of God, that we will receive what reason cannot comprehend, because he has told us so. Now, it is plain, this does no harm; it feeds duty in our lives, it inspires hope at our death. It is a doctrine that makes us live with devotion, and die with comfort.

6. It is certainly a thing very desirable, and to be wished for, that he who was manifest in the flesh should be God. Dr. Clark pursues this argument against the atheists, in his sermons at Mr. Boyle's lecture. "They must of necessity own," says he, "that supposing it cannot be proved to be true, at least it is a thing very desirable, and which any wise man would wish to be true, for the great benefit and happiness of man, that there was a God, an intelligent, and wise, a just and good being, to govern the world." And when he has drawn out this reasoning the length of three pages, he shuts it up in these words: "Since they are unavoidably obliged to confess that it is a thing very desirable there should be a God, they must of necessity be very willing, nay desire it above all things, to be convinced that their present opinion is an error." What he pleads for the great principle of natural religion, we may bring over to the case of revelation. It is certain, that if he who came down among among us is a God, our salvation is abundantly better than if he is not; because, from hence we have a nobler instance of his love, a greater

proof of the satisfaction he made, and a surer ground for our dependence upon him.

(1.) It will be easily owned, that for a *God* to be manifest in the flesh, is infinitely more kind and condescending than for the highest creature that ever was formed. For him to come into the world, of whom it is said, that "the world was made by him," gives a greater lustre to the design, than if as many angels had come down upon earth, as there are saints that go up to heaven; for still all this while, it had been only one creature dying for another. We take our estimate of that love that filled the action, from the distance of him that performed it; and therefore it must be infinitely more for God to do it, than if all the universe should conspire and agree upon the favour.

(2.) In this we have a greater proof of the satisfaction that he has made. If his dying procured our pardon, that was not owing merely to the extremity of the sorrows, but to the dignity of the sufferer; he did by himself purge away our sins, Heb. i. 3. An infinite nature was offended, and if there is any atonement to be made, it must be equal to the justice that calls for it. A life of three and thirty years, and a death of three or four hours, could never balance the eternal misery of so many thousands as are saved by it, if the chief consideration was not had of the person that endured them.

Had an angel died for us, it had been "the just for the unjust," a higher nature for a lower; but as the design of that death was to "bring in an everlasting righteousness," our very reason tells us such a sacrifice would not do; that it could not come up to the demands of eternal justice; it would have fallen short of the design. And thus uncertain must a poor Christian be left in the chief concern of his hope. He now expects that God will be gracious, because he has found a ransom. Christ Jesus gave himself a ransom for many, to be testified in due time, Job xxxiii. 24; 1 Tim. ii. 6.

Now, the question is, whether this would do? That his sufferings were as severe as they could be, is plain, but were they meritorious? Admit but into the consideration, that he who died was a God, and the difficulty is over, because an infinite nature must do every thing with an infinite value. If the sword of God was directed against his "fellow," if he who took upon him "the form of a servant," "thought it no robbery to be equal with God," then he brought all the merit we could wish into his "obedience to death, even the death of the cross." And the blood of such a one "cleanseth us from all sin;" so that, you see, allowing him to be God, answers all the scruples of unbelief; it sets our faith clear of many an incumbrance; we have more peace and joy in believing. And if by this we receive the atonement, "we have access by faith into the grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God," Rom. v. 2.

(3.) In this doctrine we have a better ground for our dependence upon him. "There is no other name given under heaven." We look to him as "the author and finisher of our faith," and the time is coming when we shall say, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Now, it is a great article in our comfort, to know in whom we believe, that he is able to keep what we have committed to him against that day, 2 Tim. i. 12.

"The best and noblest of creatures can do a great deal, but can they do enough? Is there not something that my soul wants, in the matters of religion and eternity, that lies out of their reach? I am sure it was the effect of omnipotence that I had faith at first; and what must it be that will take care of this noble creation, and raise it up to glory? Mine eye is upon Jesus; if he is God, that answers all my questions at once, because 'to God all things are possible.' If he is not, I shall never be satisfied, that he may not prove too weak for my dependence; for there are some things that no creature can do, and how know I but one of them may be the securing of my happiness? Therefore the denial of his Divinity leaves me uncertain.

He may be sufficient as a creature, but I am not sure that he is. Angels can carry my soul into Abraham's bosom, but I dare not rely upon them to make me perfect in holiness, and finish the Divine image upon me in a moment. Nay, I can hardly trust myself for this work in any lower hands than those of a God. And therefore, if Christ is to be the finisher of this faith, I cannot be so positive, and have that confidence of hope which will be steadfast to the end, if he is not 'the Mighty God, and the Everlasting Father,' as well as 'the Prince of peace.' It is because he continues for ever, that he has an unchangeable priesthood, and is therefore able to save to the uttermost," Heb. vii. 24, 25.

Thus have I considered this copious article of the Christian faith, as it is a *mystery*, and as it is a mystery of *godliness*. The application shall be only in two particulars.

1. Hence we see, it is quite wrong to pretend any explication of this doctrine, because that is the way to destroy all the mystery. There are two glories in the article; that it is true; and that it is too great for the comprehension of human reason; and I am sure it is no service to the former, if we are striving to lay aside the latter. The moment that any people can find out a way for "the natural man" to receive it, it is no longer what my text has called it; they are but darkening counsel by words without knowledge; uttering what they understand not, things too wonderful, which they know not.

Though many have thus troubled us with words, and confounded us with similitudes, yet we find it will not do. They have only armed the heresies which they ought to have destroyed. And if it was as easy to batter down the faith, as it is to expose an illustration, there had been an end of the doctrine long before this time. The reason why it has yet a standing in the church, is because it yet continues a mystery, as it is delivered in the word of God which abides for ever; for we may say of every thing that man reckons his glory, that it fades away. This

way of many of the ancients was their folly, and it is but folly in an uninterrupted succession, for their posterity to approve their sayings.

I will give you an instance how unhappy the primitive church has been in collecting the doctrine from that which is commonly called "The apostles' creed." If some have so little modesty as to give it that name, it is a pity we have so little zeal as to allow it. It is deficient in the main principles of our religion; it is redundant in matters of less importance; and it is confused in the method of laying them together. There is nothing of the great doctrine of our faith, the "three that bear record in heaven." To say that believing in the Son, and in the Holy Ghost, expresses their equality with the Father, is wrong, for we are said as much to believe in "the catholic church." There is nothing of the atonement that Christ made, but only an historical account of his death; and that so indistinct, that I know not what difference to make between his suffering under Pontius Pilate, and his being crucified and dying. It will be hard to deliver these expressions from the charge of a vain repetition. There seems to be a design in all this, to tell the story in a partial way, and leave the name of Pilate the governor as most abominable in the creed, though that of Caiaphas the high priest was so in the Bible; but here is nothing in all this to tell us what he *died for.* That article of the forgiveness of sins is placed under the head of the Holy Ghost, (from whom we have our sanctification, but not our justification,) and stands apart from those sufferings out of which it rises; and then his incarnation is mentioned with such a blunder, that all languages ought to be ashamed of it. It was said to the Virgin Mary, "*thou* shalt conceive" and bear a Son; and that word is always applied to *her.* But to have the act of conception attributed to the Holy Ghost, is such a solecism as no antiquity can protect, and no later times ought to allow.

How vain has it been to promote this doctrine by ways that God never appointed? What little arts are used to show our orthodoxy? such as bowing at

the name of Jesus, standing up at the *Gloria Patri*, tagging that to the end of every psalm, sharing out a creed between two parts of a congregation, appointing a *Trinity Sunday*, with some other shifts of the like nature. Have we found these sufficient barriers against heresy? does the Deity of Christ appear the brighter for them? or, have they not rather proved a snare to wise men, and a babble to fools? I verily believe God has suffered this truth to be run down with learning and scorn, on purpose to show us the vanity of trusting to human ramparts. If the Bible will not support the doctrine, let it fall.

2. If it is a mystery, there is no knowing it without the help of the Holy Spirit. "He searches all things; yea the deep things of God." "God reveals them to us by his Spirit;" and from him we have not only the matter but the language. We speak of them "not in the words that man's wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Ghost teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual." Is it any wonder, that they who have bartered away all the operations of the Spirit in prayer, and every other act of religion, should live to see his Divinity denied? But be you earnest for this enlightening. Study the Scriptures, and call down His assistance who can lead you into all truth; for that God who was manifest in the flesh, is "justified in the Spirit."

CHAPTER V.

GOD WAS JUSTIFIED IN THE SPIRIT.

THE first great article in the Christian faith is, that God was manifest in the flesh; that he became our companion, in order to be our sacrifice. And the second is like unto it, that he is justified in the Spirit. On these two hang all the law and the prophets. You have in them the substance of that revelation that spreads a glory quite through the Bible. The whole

gospel in all the editions that the world has of it, is comprised in the record that God has given of his Son, 1 John v. 10.

I have gone through the former of these, in which it was my fixed purpose to lay before you, not the fancies of men, whether learned or foolish, whether ancient or modern, but the plain doctrine of the Scripture in its own language, in words that the Holy Ghost teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. This is the safest way for me to speak, and the most profitable for you to receive, that "your faith may not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." I shall, in the same method, apply myself to the consideration of this other branch, that the God who was manifest in the flesh was *justified in the Spirit.* There is in the words a twofold antithesis, or distinction from what went before.

The first is in the nature or kind of the revelation; in the flesh he was *manifest,* in the spirit he is *justified.* The former does not carry the discovery far enough for his whole glory; many saw that who were strangers to the latter. That manifestation was an humbling of him, a making him of no reputation, showing him in the form of a servant. But when he is said to be "justified," all that reproach is rolled away. He is defended, approved of, and set forth in his proper greatness.

The other distinction here, is about the manner of the discovery. He was manifest "in the flesh," he is justified "in the spirit:" which may be understood these three ways: 1st, that the seat of this justification is the spirit or soul of man. 2d, that the nature of it is all inward and spiritual. 3d, that the author of it is no other than the Spirit of God. The last of these is the chief and proper sense of the word, but the first and second are so far from being opposite to it, that they are comprehended in it. For what the Spirit of God does in a way of testimony to the great Redeemer, is delivered to spiritual receivers, and conveyed with a spiritual evidence.

1. He was justified in the spirit, i. e. the seat of

this justification, the place where it is fixed, is the soul of man. That he was manifest in the flesh, we could see with our eyes; our hands might have handled the word of life. Friends and enemies, good and bad, believe it, and infidels came within the reach of this evidence. As he tells the Jews, "Ye both know me, and ye know whence I am." But when he is justified, that lies all within; there the mind, the conscience, the affections take in the argument. The manifestation here spoken of is seeing, but this justification is feeling. As the apostle says, he revealed his Son in me, Gal. i. 16. He was revealed *to* him in a light above the brightness of the sun at noonday; he sunk, and fell under the confusion of that glory. But besides that, there is a report made to his soul; he is revealed *in* him.

And this is the great work of the Holy Spirit; the thing that he has in charge; not only to make us acquainted with the story, which we have heard with our ears; not merely that we may most surely believe the matters that were made known to us by those that "were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word," but we are to receive the love of the truth, and so to be saved. Christ must dwell in our hearts by faith, 2 Thes. ii. 10; Eph. iii. 17. Indeed religion fills and feeds the life; it guides our practice, and supplies our duties, but the root of it is in the soul. The Jews would needs know when the kingdom of God was to come. Our Saviour baffles the question at the same time that he answers it. "The kingdom of God comes not with observation;" it is not a matter to be stared at, but it lies "within you;" if you have it, it is there. Christ is in you the hope of glory, Col. i. 27. This then is one interpretation of the words, that though God was manifest in the flesh, to be seen of all men, yet he is justified in the spirit. His throne is established, and his character maintained in the souls of believers. They are the temple of the living God, as God has said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people, 2 Cor. vi. 16.

2. The nature of this justification is all spiritual. As it is delivered to the mind and conscience, so it impresses these in a way suitable to the spirit of man. His manifestation was in the flesh, by miracles, signs and wonders, to show his power; by meekness, humility, and patience, to show his purity; by trouble, shame, and death, to declare his merit. These were external; the facts upon which he sustained his character were seen abroad, the thing was not done in a corner. But the manner of conveying this to the soul is different. The things of the Spirit of God are "spiritually discerned," 1 Cor. ii. 14. Though he has used similitudes, and clothed his will with metaphors that are taken from sensible objects, yet it is not the resemblance that carries them to the mind. It is not acting over the passions, as the papists do in the tragedy of Good Friday; or troubling the imagination, and assaulting the senses with strong pictures and visible representations. These are the toys of a superstitious fancy. A person who grows up to a religious manhood will put away such childish things. If all the moisture of the body was drained out at the eyes, it would not make us penitents; nor does the tumult of the affections upon this great doctrine make us believers. We may feel pity, sorrow, or terror at the thoughts of our Lord's death, and yet have no faith in his blood. "The fellowship of his sufferings" is a great deal more spiritual; it lies lower than the senses. The whole Christian life is begun, maintained, and nourished in this secret way. David observes, "Thou didst strengthen me with strength in my soul." The Scripture speaks of "the hidden man of the heart in that which is not corruptible;" and in another place, of being "strengthened with all might in the inner man," 1 Pet. iii. 4; Colossians i. 11.

This shows us the nature of true religion. "Godliness" is opposed to "bodily exercise," 1 Tim. iv. 8. It does not consist in noise and bustle. "He is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is that circumcision that is outward in the flesh." Not but that the name

of Jew was national and public, and the administration of circumcision was so external, that it passed for a visible badge of their being God's people; and therefore it might have been affirmed with truth and propriety enough, that a person of such a nation was a Jew, and he who had received such an ordinance was really circumcised. But what he means here is, that these outward characters are of no value. If there is any good in the title or in the solemnity, it is as they become spiritual. "He is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God," Rom. ii. 29. The same observation Peter makes upon an ordinance of the New Testament; "We are saved by baptism, not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God," 1 Pet. iii. 21.

Your reading and hearing are duties, but there is no religion in these, any further than your souls are engaged. The word did not profit the Jews, "not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." You ought to make a public profession of your faith in a Christ without you, in one who was manifest in the flesh; and contend for the faith that was once delivered to the saints; but your benefit in things lies all within; "With the heart man believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made to salvation," Rom. x. 10. It is one thing to be satisfied about the report that is given us of him, to know and admire the history, to approve and defend the scheme; and another to derive virtue and life from him, and feel the healing that there is in his wings. We must "obey from the heart that form of sound doctrine which is delivered to us." He was manifest in *the flesh;* but if he is justified with you and me, it is in *the spirit.* Both these interpretations of the words are supposed in, and derived from the next, viz.

3. That the Spirit is the author of this justification; it is he that works upon our souls in the manner that I have been describing. The whole life of religion is

begun and carried on by him. He brings us to Christ, and brings Christ to us. This is the great subject of practical and experimental religion; and I shall consider it in the following method:

1. How we are to understand this phrase; or what it is for a Saviour to be *justified.*

2. Upon what particular heads he has this justification.

3. When the Spirit does this office.

4. That he who is thus justified must be *God.*

5. This, as well as the former branch of our religion, is a *mystery of godliness.*

I. We shall inquire into the sense of the words, that Christ Jesus was "justified." When this is applied to sinners, it signifies a pardon of all guilt, and their acceptance in the beloved, that their iniquities are not imputed to them, but covered and blotted out, and remembered no more; they are blown away as a thick cloud, because "he was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him," 2 Cor. v. 21. But it is plain this cannot be the meaning of the word when it is applied to him, "who knew no sin," "the Lamb of God without blemish and without spot." He is not justified by the removal of any guilt, or the turning away of God's anger from him. He had "done no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." In him the Father was always "well pleased." His justification is of another kind, and comprehends these two articles; 1. That he was approved and owned. 2. That he was praised and admired.

1. He had a Divine approbation, both to his character and to his actions; that he was the Messiah, the anointed of the Lord; and that what he did was right and good. As he says, "He that sent me is with me, the Father hath not left me alone, for I do always those things that please him," John viii. 29. He was indeed "despised and rejected of men." They called his pretensions an imposture; but at the same time he could say, "He that sent me is true, whom ye know not, but I know him, and am come from him." The

apostle observes this distinction, that he was "disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious," 1 Pet. ii. 4. And as he was always conscious to this himself, so it is the very thing that the Spirit gives his witness to in the hearts of believers. As Christ says of his disciples, "They have known that all things, whatsoever thou hast given me, are of thee; for I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me, and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee; and they have believed that thou didst send me. O righteous Father, the world has not known thee, but I have known thee; and these have known that thou hast sent me," John xvii. 7, 8. 25. This was a matter of so much concern to our Lord, that he desires such a faith may spread among men, "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one, that the world may know that thou hast sent me," v. 21.

This was his justification: "I know," said he to the Jews, "whence I came, and whither I go." His inward assurance of this was the thing that he set in balance to all their reproaches, as it was foretold he should do. For this reason he "gave his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; he hid not his face from shame and spitting;" "for," said he, "The Lord God will help me, therefore I shall not be confounded; therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed," Isa. l. 6—9. And in the pursuit of this account, he uses the very word of my text, "He is near that justifieth me; who will contend with me? let us stand together; who is mine adversary? let him come near to me; behold the Lord God will help me; who is he that shall condemn me?" You see here, that he considers himself as an accused person, as one upon his trial; and that he looks for all his vindication from above, that none of their charges could be made good. And this was so evident to the confusion of his enemies, that the apostle Peter could tell the Jews, "That Jesus of Nazareth was a man approved of God among them, by signs, and miracles, and wonders, that God

did by him in the midst of them, as themselves also knew," Acts ii. 22.

2. He was also praised and admired, as another part of his justification. As it is written, "Let God be true, and every man a liar, that thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged." There was more than a bare testimony given to his character; for this came attended with commendations. Thus said the Father of him. "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." When the seventy returned and told him, "Even the devils are subject to us through thy name," he tells them there was something else which they should rather rejoice in, viz. that "their names were written in heaven." But it is observed, in that hour he was filled with divine pleasure from two things, first, The opening of his kingdom among men, that God who had "hid these things from the wise and prudent, revealed them unto babes;" and, secondly, From the fulness that his was an earnest of; "All things are delivered to me of my Father," Luke x. 20—22. This he declared at last, that "the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he came from God, and went to God," John xiii. 3.

II. On what heads is Christ thus justified? I have hinted at these already, and shall now be more distinct and copious. You will find, that the vindication given to our blessed Lord is in the following articles; 1. As to his mission, that he was sent of God. 2. As to his personal glory. 3. As to his fitness for the undertaking. 4. As to the propriety of those methods that he used. 5. As to his claim of the great reward above. 6. As to his actual possession of it. Upon those heads did the Spirit give a testimony to him, and thus was he "justified" from all the unbelief of men, and the reproach of devils.

1. He cleared up his Divine mission; that he was sent of God into the world, as the long expected blessing, the hope of Israel. The promise made to the fathers was fulfilled to their children. The Spirit revealed him to those that received the report. He that

received his testimony set to his seal that God is true. Philip comes full of the character to Nathanael, "We have found him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write," John i. 45.

And, before this, when he was in the mere passive age of life, a poor helpless infant, there was care taken to make him known; then was he "justified in the Spirit." Thus we read of Simeon, "a just and devout man," that he "waited for the consolation of Israel;" as all the good people of every age have done; they longed, they prayed, they believed the coming of a Messiah: but of this good man it is said, that "the Holy Ghost was upon him," i. e. as it is afterwards explained, it was "revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not taste death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ." This was a preparatory warning; but besides that, the testimony is given in a nearer way; for it is said, that "he came *by the Spirit* into the temple, when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law," Luke ii. 25—27. So that you see what care the Spirit took to make this discovery; how early he "justified" that great Redeemer, who was then "manifest in the flesh." Good old Simeon was desirous to deliver up his life upon this conviction, as if he had now staid long enough; "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people." This was from the testimony of the Holy Ghost; for "Joseph and his mother marvelled at the things that were spoken of him." Nay, that at the mouth of two witnesses every thing might be established, there was also one "Anna a prophetess, who coming in at that instant gave thanks likewise to the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem."

This shows that there was a great number of people who believed that the fulness of time was not far off. As Simeon waited for the consolation of Israel, so others "looked for redemption in Jerusalem." And therefore the great question now must

be that of John's disciples, "Is this he that should come, or look we for another?" To that the Spirit gave in his witness; he kept those whom the Lord had chosen, from wandering after impostors. As our Saviour observes, "All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers; but the sheep did not hear them." Now, what is it that always did, and always shall preserve this little flock from running into the error of the wicked? Nothing in themselves, but only the care of that Spirit who leads into the way of all truth. From this, it is impossible to deceive the elect; so that the signs and wonders which those false prophets and false Christs are said to do, had no influence upon them. Such as he had no care of are caught in the snare. "Ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep," said our Lord to the Jews, John x. 26. Antichrist, who is called the beast, is said to make war with the saints, and to overcome them; for power is given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations; and all that dwell on the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, Rev. xiii. 7, 8.

2. Christ is justified by the Spirit as to his own glory, that which he has in his person. "He that comes from above is above all." "The Spirit," said he, "shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and show it unto you," John xvi. 14. And what is his? "All that the Father has is mine, and therefore I said he shall take of mine, and show it unto you;" as if he should say, "My promise refers to no less than the testimony that the Spirit shall give of my equality with the Father." And though this is a mystery, it is nevertheless a truth; it is received with adoration; it comes within none of our descriptions: we are not able to explain it, and yet it is believed: it is what we hold by, as an anchor of hope, sure and steadfast; it is what we are built upon, as a pillar and ground of truth. This is the usual work of the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, when he has been a Spirit of grace and supplications. If men live in a

sense of religion, in a course of prayer and dependence, to them it is the dear doctrine of their souls, and what they tremble at the thoughts of parting with; for "if the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" I may appeal to the characters of persons, that a belief of this doctrine is no bar to free thinking; that the people who entertain it are far from giving up the liberty of their reason; they are not behind-hand with others in paying a regard to that faculty. To represent them as going on in a blind implicit way, is to abuse the tenderest part of their reputation. The man who appropriates the title of free thinker to himself, is guilty of an insolence to the world, and a piece of ill manners to his whole nature.

Blessed be God, we have searched the Scriptures, we have looked into them diligently, and endeavoured to know the mind of the Spirit; and we think it is a rational way of talking, that if the Spirit is to glorify Christ, he is to show us his full glory; and that not in deceitful terms, such as may ensnare us into idolatry. Making him the first of the creation, is far from coming up to his glory. If he is really a God, nothing short of Divinity can be his proper character. It is in vain to tell me how much better he is than the angels; that is not enough if I am to conceive of him as the first cause, and the last end of the whole creation; "For by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions, or principalities or powers; all things were created by him and for him," Col. i. 16.

Now, the Spirit is said to glorify him, by taking of his, and showing it to us. And what may be called *his?* the allotment made to him of the Father? some limited portion? No, "*all* things that the Father hath are mine." This cannot be true upon any other ground than a full equality; for if he is a creature, he is so far from having all that the Father has, that there is the same infinite distance between him and a God, that there is between God and a worm. Every creature is nearer to an insect than he

is to a God; no degrees of glory can set him above the common character. But how does Christ appear to those in whose souls the Spirit has taken his things, and shown them? Did you never know a person loose both in his talk and his morals, who despised God's law in his actions, and the gospel in his arguments? Have you never known such a one awakened, convinced, and made to cry out, "what shall I do to be saved?" Has he, after this, come to be easy and satisfied in religion, to have a peace and hope in believing? Inquire of such a one what he takes his Saviour to be, what notions he has of him, who is the author, and must be finisher of his faith. Certainly, the man, by growing sober, has not lost his reason. Because he minds the Sabbath, dares not swear and drink as he used to do, will you for this call him an enthusiast? Here is a remarkable change in his life, and shall there be no regard had to his way of thinking? I am apt to believe, it is very easy to guess on which side of the question such an awakened penitent, such an enlightened convert, would give his answer. He will cry out as Thomas did upon a recovery, "My Lord and my God," John xx. 28.

3. Christ is justified in his fitness for the undertaking; that he is equal to the design. God has laid help on one that is mighty, one chosen from among the people, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to show unto man his uprightness, Psal. lxxxix. 19; Job xxxiii. 23. We are to believe that he had all that is required in a Mediator between God and man; a purity in himself, that he was the holy one of God; a merit in his sufferings, that when he was "numbered with the transgressors," "he made his soul an offering for sin." "He put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." This can arise from nothing but the dignity and value of his person; not only what is moral, that he should be innocent, and die the just for the unjust; that might have been said of an angel; but what may be called a natural dignity. The atonement that he made was fit for an infinite majes-

ty to receive, and equal to all that an infinite justice demanded; and therefore we read of a God who "purchased the church with his own blood," Acts xx. 28.

To say, that this expression does not prove him God, because as such he could not die or bleed, is an argument that concludes as much against their own scheme as any other; for if he is allowed to have any nature besides the human, if he is above the angels, even that nature could not be said to die. Had he been only an angel, to talk of the blood of such a one, is a harshness of language that we could not allow; and it can be understood no other way than this, that though he died, was a man, a partaker of that flesh and blood that made him capable of such a fate, yet he was also to be considered under a higher character. Now, it is plainly said of him who purchased the church with his own blood, that his superior nature was that of a God; that as it is certain he was more than a man, so this word is to tell you what he is more. If any would turn the phrase thus, that the church is indeed the flock of God, which Christ has purchased with his blood, methinks, the Holy Spirit was aware of that evasion, and has barred against it, by telling us, that this God purchased the flock with *his own blood.* That phrase is so fully relative to the person of whom he speaks, that according to his way of talking, the proprietor and purchaser of this church is the same. He *whose* it is (that is God) has laid down the price of it.

There is another interpretation of these words that I have heard of, (for if we follow these notions closely, we shall find them shift and double,) that the expression "purchased with his blood" does not refer to God in the clause immediately foregoing, but to Christ of whom he had formerly spoken; but if you consult your Bibles, you will see that he had not mentioned the name of Christ in less than seven verses before; and one would think the opinion is far-fetched as the connection, and that certainly people must be strangely in love with a notion, which they are resolved to have

against all the rules of grammar and language. Which of the expositions appears to have less of force and violence, ours that joins a word with that which is the nearest to it, or theirs that trails it backwards the length of seven verses, into a sentence that was entire and concluded before?

It is upon the head of his fitness for the work of redemption, that the Spirit glorifies the Son; "Our conversation is in heaven, from whence we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ," Phil. iii. 20, 21. And, what are we looking for at his hand? that which is no less than the work of Omnipotence, what none but a God can do; that he "will change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." If any one says, that as he is the best and greatest of creatures, so every thing must be subject to him, *that* puts my faith however out of a Divine correspondence: it fixes on an object that is not God. But, supposing we should use other scriptures as we do this, and say that the term of "subduing all things" does not signify Omnipotence, where should we have one text to prove that perfection of the Divine Nature? or how could it be more fully asserted of the Father, than it is here of the Son? What reason have I to think that the words in this epistle mean infinitely less than they do in Job xlii. 2. "I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no counsel can be withholden from thee?" It is from the Divinity of Christ that we argue his fitness for the whole design; for he must be counted worthy of more honour than Moses, inasmuch as he that built the house, has more honour than the house. And he who has thus built all things, is God, Heb. iii. 3, 4.

4. Our Saviour is justified in the Spirit, as to the propriety of those methods that he used in working out the redemption of his people. He proceeded in the right way, that which Infinite wisdom had contrived. He pursued the plan that was laid in the

counsel of peace. The Son of man went as it was written of him; he spake of his sufferings as the result of a previous agreement: "The Father knows me, and I know the Father, and I lay down my life for the sheep," John x. 15. Both his enemies and his people were apt to confine their thoughts, and look no further than the malice of the Jews, that was all enraged by the envy of the priests. Thus narrowly do the two disciples that were going to Emmaus tell their melancholy story, that Jesus of Nazareth was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, but the chief priests and rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him: but, say they, we trusted it had been he who should have redeemed Israel, Luke xxiv. 19—21; as if they had said, it appears by such a fate, that we were mistaken in our man. They knew not how to bring the cross into their notions of a Saviour: a death of that nature had razed out all the regard they used to have for his miracles and doctrine.

But in this he is "justified by the Spirit:" all that scandal is over, which was once so important to the disciples. We can now consider the whole train of his reproaches, torments, and his death, as a design. "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain," Acts ii. 23. What a different way of thinking had these good men got into! Before his death they could never be patient at what he often told them, that the Son of man should be delivered into the hands of men, and they would take him and crucify him. Peter rebuked him for it; "Lord, this be far from thee." Sorrow filled their hearts, they knew not what to say of it; and yet after these things were over, the offence of the cross was made to cease. It was so far from being their dread and shame, as they once thought it, that they could "glory in the cross of Christ," Gal. vi. 14. And though this doctrine remained a stumbling-block to their countrymen the Jews, it was none to them.

They preached Christ crucified, both to the Jews and Greeks, the wisdom of God, and the power of God, 1 Cor. i. 24.

It is plain from a cloud of witnesses out of the Old Testament, that the great design of salvation was always revealed as a thing to be brought about by the sufferings of a Redeemer. The first promise of all was not silent upon this doctrine: for though the seed of the woman was to "bruise the serpent's head," yet the serpent was to "bruise his heel;" and all along, as a greater light came in with later prophesies, it was still to show that there must be an atonement. But the Jews, to whom the oracles of God were committed, had a vail upon their minds, and to the last they were blind as to this character of a Messiah. They who were so critical in knowing the place of his birth, and the family out of which he was to arise, never so much as think of the main part that he should act, that he was to "be cut off, but not for himself," Dan. ix. 26. This was so far from being their opinion, that they give it out as a challenge, "If he be the Christ, the King of Israel, let him descend from the cross, and we will believe," Matt. xxvii. 42. Now, had he descended from the cross, they ought not to have believed him: had he not submitted to death, and even of that scandalous sort, he had been none of that Saviour who was to bear our sins in his body on the tree, and to make an open show of principalities and powers, triumphing over them in his cross, Col. ii. 15.

Upon this head he is "justified by the Spirit." The apostles made no secret of that, which we should have thought they might have concealed, his being "numbered among the transgressors." This was no longer a reproach to them, but what they ventured to talk of in the most public manner. "They that dwell at Jerusalem and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath-day, have fulfilled them in condemning him. And though they found no cause of death in him, yet they desired Pilate that

he should be slain. And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulchre," Acts xiii. 27—29. This scandalous circumstance of his death they are not ashamed of, but are ready to own it on all occasions, not only in their doctrines to the people, but their arguments with the enemy. Thus they confronted the greatest authority at Jerusalem. "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree."

5. He is "justified in the Spirit," as to his claim of a reward in heaven. There was a glory designed for him, as the recompense of all his duty and trouble. Under that view the Father has called him by the name of a servant. "My servant shall deal prudently; he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high: as many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man's, and his form more than the sons of men," Isa. lii. 13—15. In proportion to the astonishment that was occasioned by this, so "shall he sprinkle many nations." It is very evident, the reward conferred upon him is more than his own personal glory above; it also takes in an empire below. Thus he is to sprinkle many nations, drop the gospel among them as the rain, and distil it as the dew, by which he will convey a sense of his majesty into the minds of those who before despised him. "Kings shall shut their mouths at him; for that which has not been told them shall they see, and that which they have not heard shall they consider."

Little could his enemies, or indeed his disciples, imagine, that the contradiction of sinners which he endured against himself, was both the merit and the preparation of a future happiness. But afterwards he approved himself to their reasons upon this head. "Ought not Christ to suffer these things, and to enter into his glory?" His enduring the cross, and despising the shame, is accounted for by this supposition: he submitted to all that, "for the joy that was set before him." This came to be understood as a good argument afterwards. "He was obedient to death,

even the death of the cross, and *therefore* God has highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name," Phil. ii. 8, 9. During his lifetime he was esteemed "stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted." Thus it was foretold they would reason. "Let us persecute and take him, for God has forsaken him;" and so they did in fact. "He trusted in God that he would save him; let him deliver him now if he will have him." And yet in all this he glorified the Father upon earth, and finished the work that was given him to do; John xvii. 4, 5; upon which he lays his claim to the glory he had with the Father before the world was. "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." Rev. v. 12.

6. The Spirit justifies Christ in his actual possession of the reward. In this world he had a claim to it, and now he enjoys the thing itself. "I overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne," Rev. iii. 21. This gives a value to the other doctrines; for if it can be proved that he was raised by the Father, and set at his own right hand, it will from thence be concluded, that all his former sufferings were appointed and admired. Now, to this the Holy Spirit has given an abundant evidence, and made it the main article of our religion. The apostles were set apart to be witnesses of his resurrection; Acts i. 22; and in this office they acted by the Spirit, who had been promised to them. Thus they tell their enemies, "Ye denied the Holy One and the just, and desired a murderer to be granted to you, and killed the Prince of life, whom God has raised from the dead, whereof we are witnesses," Acts iii. 14, 15. They repeat the same afterwards upon another trial, with the addition of this greater testimony, that is mentioned in my text. "Him has God exalted with his own right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins; and we are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Ghost, whom God has given to them that obey him."

When they speak in this manner, it is agreeable to what our Lord himself had told them. He said unto them, "Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; and ye are witnesses of these things; and behold I send the promise of my Father upon you;" Luke xxiv. 46. 48, 49.

The miracles they wrought were so many attestations to the glory of a Redeemer. It is thus that Peter explains the cure of the poor lame man in Solomon's porch. "Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel, if we be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole; be it known unto you, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, and whom God raised from the dead, even by him does this man stand here before you whole," Acts iv. 8—10. He goes on to tell them what they would not believe, that "this is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner; neither is there salvation in any other." The preaching the gospel, and the wonders they showed in confirmation of that doctrine, were so many public arguments that their Saviour had "loosed the bonds of death." Therefore it is said, that "with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all." This was a Divine testimony given to the faith of believers. "The salvation that began to be spoken by the Lord Jesus, was confirmed to us by them that heard him; God bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will," Heb. ii. 3, 4. This leads me to show,

III. When the Holy Spirit gives in his testimony, and fulfills the office that is devolved upon him, of justifying that God who was manifest in the flesh. This may be considered in a way of gradation. He does it "at sundry times, and in divers manners." The Scripture has furnished us with several particulars.

Christ was justified in the Spirit, 1. By the prophetical warnings that were given of him. 2. By his personal furniture. 3. At the hour of his death and suffering. 4. More especially at his resurrection. 5. At the day of Pentecost. 6. In the conviction of sinners. 7. In the consolation of believers.

1. The Spirit justified our dear Lord before his coming into the world. This he did through all the ages of religion, ever since "men began to call upon the name of the Lord." It was by faith that they offered acceptable sacrifices, down from righteous Abel to the fulness of time. "Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you; searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ that was in them did signify, when it testified before-hand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow," 1 Pet. i. 10, 11. You see, this was their main inquiry; the thing they prophesied of was the grace that should come to us; the Spirit that they prophesied by was the Spirit of Christ; the discoveries they received from him were about the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. They did not consider themselves as the servants of a particular generation, but took it for granted they were writing for posterity. "Unto whom it was revealed, that not to themselves, but to us they did minister the things that are reported unto you," verse 12.

Though Christ was only "manifest in these last times," yet he "was verily fore-ordained before the foundation of the world;" and that was all along the food given to the faith and hope of the Old Testament saints. The apostle tells the Jews, that this is an affair of which God had "spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began;" by which assertion you see what a compass he takes both in breadth and length. "All the holy prophets" have borne this testimony, and they have done it ever "since the world began." He gives them an instance, that "Moses truly said unto the fathers, a prophet

shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, like unto me." And then adds, "Yea all the prophets from Samuel, and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days," Acts iii. 22. 24. As if that was their main business, to let the world know what God would do in the fulness of time. He speaks of this as the grand concern. "Behold the days come, that I will perform that good thing which I have promised to the house of Israel, and to the house of Judah. In those days, and at that time, will I cause the branch of righteousness to grow up unto David, and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land," Jer. xxxiii. 14, 15. Out of these particulars the apostle works an argument, by which he would insinuate himself, and the doctrine that he came with, to the esteem of the Jews. "Ye are all the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers." This was the office of the Spirit in those early ages, not only to give them light about their present duty, but to put them in mind of that better thing that God had provided for us. For "these all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and confessed they were strangers and pilgrims upon the earth," Heb. xi. 13. It was thus that David, "being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne: he seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, nor did his flesh see corruption," Acts ii. 29—31.

2. Our Lord was justified in the Spirit as to his personal furniture. We read of his qualifications for an office that never any but himself was put into. "He whom God has sent, speaks the words of God, for God gives not the Spirit by measure to him," John iii. 34. What he did either in a way of duty or of miracle is ascribed to this. It was thus that he discovered himself to be the Mediator between God and man, and determined the faith of good people in the

greatest concern they could have. John the Baptist must have been acquainted with him in his childhood and youth, their mothers being so near relations. He must have heard of the wonderful things that happened at the visit that Mary paid to Elizabeth, who cried out, "Whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come unto me; for lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy." He heard, no doubt, what things his own father said at his circumcision, that he should be "the prophet of the Highest," and closed it with these words; "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has redeemed and visited his people;" and what Simeon and Anna declared soon after the birth of Jesus. Though he continued in the deserts, he could not be such a stranger in Israel, as not to have heard of these events.

But yet he professes that the main testimony was given by the Holy Spirit. "I knew him not," saith he, i. e. not fully, not free of all scruple, "but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost; and I saw and bare record, that this is the Son of God," John i. 33, 34. The passage he refers to is what the several evangelists have given us, that "when Jesus was baptized and prayed, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended, in a bodily shape like a dove, upon him, and a voice came from heaven which said, Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased." Thus does Christ speak of his ministerial qualifications, that a fulness of wisdom was in him. "The Spirit of the Lord," saith he, "is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the gospel," Luke iv. 18. And this was long since foretold, that "the Spirit of the Lord should rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord," Isa. xi. 2. Thus he performed his miracles, as Peter tells Cornelius, "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy

Ghost and with power, who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him," Acts x. 38. This was the method into which he threw his designs, for "he was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil," Mat. iv. 1.

3. The Spirit *justified* our dear Lord at the hour of his death and sufferings. This was by giving value to his blood, and supporting the courage and resolution of his human nature. The Scripture has been very particular, that "through the eternal Spirit, he offered himself without spot unto God," Heb. ix. 14. It was not merely the extremity of dying that brought in an everlasting righteousness, but the merit arose from the dignity of him that suffered. He was then full of the Holy Ghost. This set a joy before him that made him neither afraid nor ashamed to die; for if it is said of Stephen, that "he being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly to heaven, and saw the glory of God," much more may it be affirmed of him who had "not the Spirit by measure."

4. Another time when the Spirit did his office, was upon the resurrection of our Saviour. Then was he "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness," Rom. i. 4. Sometimes this work is ascribed to the Father, that "he glorified his Son Jesus, and raised him from the dead, and gave him glory," Acts iii. 13; 1 Pet. i. 21. "Thou," saith Christ, "wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thy holy One to see corruption," Psal. xvi. 10. It is said of the Son himself, that it was not possible that he should be holden of death, Acts ii. 24. This agrees to what he had told them before. "No man takes my life from me; I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again," John x. 18.

And in several places it is asserted of the Holy Ghost. Hence we read of "the Spirit of him who raised up Jesus from the dead," that this spirit is to quicken us. He was "put to death in the flesh, but

quickened by the Spirit," 1 Pet. iii. 18. Under this head I may bring in the great things that he did between his leaving the sepulchre, and going up for good and all to the kingdom. His conversation with the disciples for the space of forty days is mentioned this way, that "he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments to the apostles whom he had chosen," Acts i. 2. It was thus that he instructed them, and opened their understandings; for he had told them before his death, "I have many things to say to you, but ye cannot bear them now; howbeit, when the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth," John xvi. 12, 13. So that when he spake to them concerning things pertaining to the kingdom of God, it was through the Holy Ghost that he gave them commandments. In this manner they were not only persuaded of his resurrection themselves, but led into the right way of declaring it to others; "That repentance and remission of sins should be preached among all nations in his name, beginning at Jerusalem." Thus he was justified in the Spirit.

5. This was most eminently done on the day of Pentecost. They tarried at Jerusalem till they were "endued with power from on high." This he calls *baptizing* them "with the Holy Ghost." He fell upon every one of them. All the retinue of that effusion was wonderful, the manner of its coming on, and every consequence that followed after. There was suddenly "a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance," Acts ii. 2—4. This amazed, as well it might, all the devout men that were gathered from every nation to the feast at Jerusalem. But,

Peter defends the Providence against them that mocked, and explains it to those that marvelled; that they are to understand it two ways, first, as an accomplishment of an ancient prophecy out of Joel; and,

secondly, as a testimony given from heaven to that Person whom they had despised, and hated, and killed. From hence they might see, that he was admitted into the honours of another world, though he had been so rudely treated in this. "Being by the right-hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he has shed forth this which ye now see and hear." What they saw and heard gave in a full evidence, that though he had been despised and rejected of men, yet he was chosen of God, and precious. And upon the whole, he concludes, "Let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that the same Jesus whom ye have crucified, has God made both Lord and Christ." By this they might find he was another sort of person than they took him for; the great Head of authority above, and the great Head of influence below. Such an effusion as that, was an argument of his having a throne. He could not be deserted of the Father, as they imagined, if he received such a fulness into his own hands, and made these distributions among his people. This is what the apostle Peter enlarges on in his speech or sermon, and he refers to it afterwards in his letter, that "the gospel is preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven," 1 Pet. i. 12.

6. The Spirit continues to justify Christ in the conviction of sinners; he attends the preaching of the gospel, and makes it useful to those who are "dead in trespasses and sins," as our Lord promised he should do. "When he is come he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment; of sin, because they believe not in me; of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged," John xvi. 8—11. These are things that none but the Spirit can impress upon us; they are what man's wisdom is so far from teaching, that it reckons them foolishness. The sin of not believing in him gives no trouble, till they are made to see what he is in himself, and what he must be to them, if ever they are happy. Their unbelief is what they used to

plead for; they had a great many arguments to defend it; but when the Spirit fell to work with them, as it is said of the Jews who gloried in having shed his blood, they were "pricked in their hearts, and cried out, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Then this sin lay heavy upon them.

It is the same as to that righteousness that is revealed to us by the Holy Spirit. Men by nature have no notion of any other acceptance with God than what they give themselves. But when the Holy Ghost has humbled us for our iniquity, he shows us that no merit of ours can be the ground of a pardon; but the righteousness in which we are justified is owing to this, that Christ is gone to the Father. He leads us up to the Advocate whom we have above, and engages all our desires to be "found in him." And then, lest their convictions should be attended with dark thoughts about the event of a war with Satan, he tells them that "the prince of this world is judged," and that we come by our peace, and hope, and joy, by believing. It is his blessing upon our ministry, that makes Christ known among you. "Ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart," 2 Cor. iii. 3.

7. The Spirit justifies our blessed Lord by the consolations that are given to a believer. Our duty is expressed by "walking in the Spirit;" our privilege is called a being "led by the Spirit;" and as many as are so led "are the sons of God," Gal. v. 25. Rom. viii. 14. Now, in all this operation, he is leading the soul nearer to Jesus Christ. "He shall glorify me," saith our Lord, "for he shall take of mine and show it unto you." Thus he carries on "the work of faith with power." The holiness he recommends to us, is what he shows in Christ; he takes of *his*. And when he conveys any comfort into our souls, it is a taking of his, revealing his love and his grace, and from each of these he raises in the believer a courage to die; as the apostle argues, "now little children, abide in him, that

when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming," 1 John ii. 28.

The sanctification that the Spirit gives us is a living argument that Christ is "Head over all things unto the church." We, as the several members, are nourished by an influence from him, and "increase with the increase of God." It is thus we know, that he has reconciled our souls to Divine justice, and that he has renewed and prepared them for the Divine mercy. "This is he that came by water and blood; even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood; and it is the Spirit that bears witness, because the Spirit is truth," 1 John v. 6. How does he bear witness of these things, that Christ came both for our atonement and for our holiness, but by throwing his evidence within, giving us a conformity to him, and making us partakers of his purity and of a gladness among his fellows? This is part of the kingdom of God, which consists in peace and "joy in the Holy Ghost." And happy are the people that justify Him who laid down his life to justify them. "No man, speaking by the Spirit of God, calls Jesus accursed; and no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost," 1 Cor. xii. 3.

IV. He who is thus justified in the Spirit is no other than the *Most High God.* The name that he goes by in the first branch of our religion runs through the other articles, and belongs to all the great things that are said of him in the text. I have shown you that he could never have answered the end of being "manifest in the flesh," if he had not been "God over all, blessed for ever." And I shall now consider his Divine nature, as it further appears from the testimony of the Holy Ghost; that he who received such a witness as this, must be God. Because, the Spirit is what he himself purchased and deserved; what he sent upon his own authority. This Spirit represents him as equal to all the demands of God's justice, as the giver of all the grace that his people want; as one capable of answering our dependence; and as a person entitled to the glory of another world.

Such a testimony as this, is too much for a creature: it is only a God who can be thus "justified in the Spirit."

1. Consider, that the Spirit who gives in this testimony of Christ, is sent down upon the purchase made by Him. Now, who is he that could *deserve* so great a gift to his church? That merit did not arise merely from the violence of his pain, or the innocence of his person. Suppose an angel had put on a dying nature, and made himself capable of enduring the cross, what had been the proper reward of such an obedience? We may imagine, that as men had put him to death, so his integrity would be cleared; and as God had appointed it, so he should have a greater honour upon his return to heaven; but can it be thought that in this action he could be of value enough to make a purchase for others, and that of the greatest blessings that ever can be given? If such an angel was exalted to a higher degree of personal glory, it is as much as he could expect; but is it likely that we in this lower nature should be ever the better for what he did?

Well, do but give a little scope to your meditations; consider what Christ has drawn in, and collected to himself by dying; not only "a name above every name," a better estate than that of the angels, but a fullness of grace for all his people. There are many thousands in the different ages and countries of the world for whom he has "obtained an eternal redemption."

And what does this salvation begin with, what is it assured by, but the gift of the Holy Spirit? "Ye trusted in Christ, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession to the praise of *his* glory," Eph. i. 12—14. This is more than any creature can deserve. The merit must arise from the dignity of the person that suffered, because it reaches not only to himself, but the

whole body of his people; and besides, it includes not only the common favours which they had lost, but the greatest blessing that God himself could give. God reveals by the Spirit the things that he has prepared for them that love him. "We have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God," 1 Cor. ii. 10. 12.

Now, what must he be, whose blood had such a value in it, that for his sake, the Spirit should come down from on high, to fill *his* place, to do his work as a deputy, and to share his glory as a partner? The prophet puts the question so high, that no creature can answer it. "Who has directed the Spirit of the Lord, and who, being his counsellor, has taught him?" Isa. xl. 13. We may with still more reason ask, who could deserve this Spirit of the Lord, or have merit enough to oblige him? Or, to put it into the prophet's next words, "Who has first given to the Lord?" No creature in heaven or in earth could pretend to the former, to direct that Spirit who has produced and modelled the universe, and as little could any deserve him, or lay him under an obligation to come and do a greater task than making the world.

But such a one there is to whom the Spirit was owing, for whose sake believers should have him; or, to preserve the language of the Bible, he has "first given to the Lord, and therefore it shall be recompensed to him again." Here is one who has redeemed them that were under the law, that they might receive the adoption of sons; and because they are sons, the Spirit of the Son is sent into their hearts, crying, Abba, Father, Gal. iv. 5, 6. He has done that, which makes it more than an act of bounty for the Holy Ghost to be sent; it is what eternal justice owes him. And who is he, that could thus bargain with God, and not only desire, but demand the greatest blessing that he ever did give, or ever will? Christ has claimed all this to himself. "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter, that

he may abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth, who dwelleth with you, and shall be in you," John xiv. 16, 17. Do but take the whole scheme of redemption together; consider with care what the gift of the Spirit is; how useful, how glorious! and remember of this there was a purchase, i. e. something was done of equal value to it, that fully deserved it. Think seriously of the matter in this connexion, and the current of your meditations will have weight enough to bear down the crackling of thorns, and the laughter of fools.

2. This Spirit is sent by our Lord's authority. Sometimes he represents his part in sending him as an act of intercession. "I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Comforter;" and there is no doubt to be made of it, but he carried to heaven with him the begging, the inferior, the depending nature; that with which, "in the days of his flesh, he offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears." Heb. v. 7. But he also speaks in a language that signifies a great deal more; as if it was his own doing. "If I go away, I will send him to you." This was the result of his own greatness, and his return to the glory that He had with the Father before the world was. "I send," saith he, "the promise of my Father upon you;" and this was enduing them "with power from on high." Luke xxiv. 49. It is the first grant that he makes from his throne. They were to be endued with power from on high, when he himself had received all power both in heaven and earth. The angels then began to pay him their homage. For when the first-begotten was brought into the world, it was said, "Let all the angels of God worship him." Heb. i. 6. He has also given proper notice of his accession to that dignity among those few sheep whom he had left in the wilderness. The Spirit was not given till Jesus was glorified, John vii. 39. The Scripture, by putting things into that order, lets us see that this is one consequence of his majesty; it comes in among the first fruits of his empire.

And who is great enough to make such a disposal,

at whose command the eternal Spirit comes down, and goes through the mighty offices of a Sanctifier and a Comforter? This Spirit who should lead them into all truth, was not to speak of himself, but whatsoever he heard he was to speak: and saith Christ, "he shall glorify *me*, for he shall take of *mine* and show it unto you." John xvi. 13, 14. We may use our Lord's own argument; Whether is greater, he that is sent, or He that sent him? certainly, he that sent him. Now, if Jesus had only a created nature, this is more than he could do. Men and angels cannot give the Spirit; but he speaks like a God. "He breathed on the disciples, saying, receive ye the Holy Ghost." John xx. 22.

This is what none could say but himself. I do not deny, but some vain men have pretended to use those words; but theirs ought to be numbered among the mouths that speak blasphemy against the tabernacle of God, and some of them received the due reward of their deeds. This language of Christ was fitted to no lips but his own. There could not be a greater crime than to suppose, that "the gift of God might be purchased with money." Consider the design, the nature, the mystery of the Spirit's operations, to what purposes he is present with believers through all the dangers and duties of life, and how he carries them over death and darkness into the mansions above; and then remember who it is that sends him, and you will soon conclude that he comes from the God of salvation, to whom belong the issues from death. "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit; there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord; and there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God who works all in all." 1 Cor. xii. 4, 5, 6.

3. You may further argue the Divine nature of our Redeemer from the testimony that the Spirit gives to him in your own souls, when it leads you to depend upon him for acceptance with God. I do not wonder, that they who deny his Deity, throw contempt upon his *satisfaction*. As they have trodden under foot the Son of God, they count the blood of the covenant

wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy or a common thing; thus denying the Lord that bought them. It is plain they see no need of this atonement; they can imagine a way to happiness without it. And from hence you may conclude, that the Spirit has not convinced them of sin; he has not bound upon the conscience all the severity and terror of a righteous law. The apostle was "without the law once;" though he pretended to value it, yet by that he could see no fault in himself, but brings in this verdict, that touching the righteousness of the law, he was blameless. Thus was he alive in his own opinion; no pains or sense of death gave him any trouble; but at last "the commandment came," by which phrase he must signify a great deal more than his regard to it, for that he had all along; it came with a new sort of weight, for then "sin revived, and he died." He would no longer think himself blameless touching the righteousness of the law, for the commandment that was ordained unto life, he found to be unto death; not that that which was good in itself was made death to him, but sin by the commandment appeared exceeding sinful: for, saith he, "the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin," Rom. viii. 9—14. Just so it will be with every one of us, when the Spirit of God does those offices upon our souls that he is sent into the world about, i. e. to convince of sin, and righteousness, and judgment. When he has convinced us of sin, he has virtually struck off all our dependence upon the creature: we dare trust to no duties, no graces or comforts; these are imperfect and impure; neither great enough in their quantity, nor good enough in their nature. We then look to Christ for righteousness, because he is gone to the Father.

How should his going to the Father make us apprehensive of a righteousness by him? It certainly proclaims the Divinity of his person, that he is equal with God, and as such a one, he is gone to manage the whole concern of our redemption. An infinite nature was offended in its holiness, and engaged against us in its justice. Now, who could be fit to

transact with him upon the head of peace and reconciliation? Job takes it for granted, that there could be no pardon, because, saith he, "He is not a man as I am, that I should come before him." His argument turns upon this, that whoever deals with God in a treaty of salvation for poor lost sinners, must be upon his level; as great as he is, or as he is called "a daysman between us, who may lay his hand upon us both." The Lord Jesus Christ in coming down upon earth, proves himself to be formed out of the clay, a true representation of one party; he was made lower than the angels for the suffering of death. But now, in his going to the Father, we are convinced that what he did was the righteousness in which his people are found; that the sword of God has been directed against the man who is his fellow. He knew that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God, Zech. xiii. 7; John xiii. 3.

It is only in this view that an awakened conscience can have peace. The Spirit, after he has unsettled the sinner, and driven him from his other dependencies, shows him a merit that will do; that though Christ is in the form of a servant, he thinks it no robbery to be equal with God. The soul regards him as "Jehovah our righteousness," Jer. xxiii. 6. Destroy that title, and our comfort in him gives way. When he invites the ends of the earth to look unto him that they may be saved, Isa. xlv. 22; he gives this reason for the call, this ground for their hope, that he is the Lord, and there is none else. And when the believer gives out the confidence that he has in him, it is still upon this ground. "In the Lord, shall one say, I have righteousness and strength; to him shall all men come, and in the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified," Isa. xlv. 24, 25.

Indeed the name of *Lord*, as well as that of God, is scattered among the creatures. "There are gods many, and lords many;" but when it is used with the highest attributes, when the greatest things are affirmed of him that has it, the sense is determined.

If we read of a Lord that gives us food and raiment, and protects us in our way, perhaps there is no necessity to understand so much by it; but the Lord, in whom we have "righteousness," to appear in the presence of eternal justice; the Lord by whom we have "strength" to encounter Satan, to go forth conquering and to conquer; he by whom "all the seed of Israel" in every country, people, tongue, and nation, in every age of the world, are to be justified and to glory, must be the Lord besides whom there is none else; for he that glories is to "glory in the Lord."

It is supposed that he who undertook our redemption was in this respect equal to the design, because "being the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person, after he had by himself purged away our sins, he for ever sat down on the right hand of God," Heb. i. 3. There are four things to be observed in the gradation of that sentence.

First, That it was not every one who could enter into the design. He that does it must be "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person." It was necessary he should have such a dignity in himself, or otherwise he had fallen beneath the undertaking. If he was not all this, it signified nothing what he could do.

Secondly, It was this personal merit that made the atonement. "By himself" he purged away our sins; not only as he made an offering of himself, but his own virtue conveyed a value to those sufferings, and made them effectual.

Thirdly, It is from both these considerations that he takes his place at the right hand of God. He could not have gone thither, had he not been the brightness of his glory; and therefore, though the expression of sitting at the right hand, does sometimes signify the happiness of a creature, what believers are capable of, it is plain *that* cannot be the meaning here. For Christ's taking that place is put upon the dignity of his person, that he was equal to the Father; and in that character, as soon as he had done his

work on earth, he went up to heaven. And therefore,

Fourthly, This must signify that in him, which cannot be given to a creature, because the reasons for it are peculiar to himself; and it is understood in such a sense, as makes it incommunicable; "for to which of the angels said he at any time, sit thou at my right hand?" Heb. i. 5.

4. The Spirit leads us to Christ as the giver of what we want. They are his people whom he makes willing; they worship him in the beauties of holiness. "He is the author and finisher of faith." He has promised to be with us to the end of the world. This cannot be understood of his human nature; for "the heavens have received that till the time of the restitution of all things," Acts iii. 21. And therefore when he tells the disciples, "Yet a little while, and ye see me no more; and again, yet a little while, and ye shall see me;" it must be understood of two different natures, unless we will dash upon a contradiction, and make one part of the sentence destroy the other. They were to see and know him "no more after the flesh;" 2 Cor. v. 16; whither he went they could not come; and yet he would see them again, and not leave them comfortless, John xiv. 18. Nay, he tells them, that his presence with them would be vital; sufficient to all the purposes of duty, and a full security of happiness; "Because I live, ye shall live also." There was to be a communication, a vein of influence reaching from heaven to earth; a life from him streaming down to them.

And what apprehensions must we have of him, who is the fountain of such an existence? Who must he be that makes us live over again, that gives us a part in the first resurrection? How shall we find a harmony between what he says to the Father, and what he tells the disciples? To the Father he professes, "I am no more in the world; but these are in the world, and I come to thee;" and yet to his people he has promised, "Wherever two or three are

met in my name, I am in the midst of them." The council at Jerusalem took knowledge of the apostles, that they had been with Jesus. How could that be, when he was in heaven, and they on earth? They must mean, either that their having been formerly with him had left impressions behind; or rather, that they were struck with a sense of some new conversation; they took knowledge that they had been with Jesus. Now, who is it that could be both in heaven and earth, but he who had said of himself to Nicodemus, "no man has ascended up into heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man, who is in heaven?" John iii. 13.

All religion is the work of a God. A convert is "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God," John i. 13. The author of every good and perfect gift, is the Father of lights, who of his own will begets us by the word of truth, James i. 17, 18. And therefore, if we have our dependence upon Christ for these things, the Spirit, in leading us to him, tells us what he is. The apostle numbers the steps by which he went up to his glory; first, that he was raised by "the working of a mighty power;" then "set at the right hand of God," angels and principalities and dominions being made subject to him; and then appointed to be "head over all things unto the church," Eph. i. 19—23. Now, how can he be equal to this relation, if he is no more than a creature? For the church is his body, which he not only guides, but animates. He is the head, from which an influence comes that exceeds all the courses of nature; and therefore he must have "the fullness of him, who fills all in all." As the consequence and argument of such a capacity, he *quickens* those who are "dead in trespasses and sins," Eph. ii. 1. This quickening is the same with working faith in them; and that was by such an exceeding greatness of his power, as could be equalled by nothing but his own resurrection. Now, who is it that "quickens the dead, and calls the things that are not as though they were?" Rom. iv. 17.

This act of conversion is all along made to be as great as a resurrection; and therefore if a Divine power is necessary for the one, it must be so for the other.

Abraham's faith was acting a great part, when he believed in God that raises the dead. And what must the Spirit teach us to think of a Redeemer, when we are led to him as the author of grace? when he puts us into a state of perpetual deriving from him, that the whole body being thus maintained, may increase with the increase of God?" Can this be, if they do not increase with the gifts of a God? It is for this reason that the words are used promiscuously; sometimes we are said to be "called of God," and sometimes "preserved in Christ Jesus, and called," Jude 1. We are "the workmanship of God," and yet are "created anew in Christ Jesus." Our religion is a renewal of us into the image of him that created us. "God dwells in us, and we in him," says the apostle John. "I will be in you, and you in me," says Christ himself. The Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ are spoken of under the same attributes. The Scripture uses either of the expressions, as meaning but one thing. And can we think that a creature must have his name used in common with God, who is at an infinite distance from every work of his hand, whatever glory he has imparted to it? Why should the apostle talk, in the same breath, of two such distant natures, and observe no guard or modesty in his transition from the one to the other? "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of *God* dwell in you. Now, if any man have not the Spirit of *Christ*, he is none of his; and if *Christ* be in you, the body is dead, because of sin; but the Spirit is life, because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of *him* who raised up Christ from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall quicken your mortal bodies, by his Spirit that dwelleth in you," Rom. viii. 9—11.

The Spirit leads us to Christ, as one that can answer all our dependence upon him. "Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name

given under heaven among men, whereby we must be saved." After the soul is quickened, we are to live upon him. The same hand that began the good work, is to carry it on and perform it. As we say that Providence is a continued creation, so the preserving of our faith and hope and love, is the work of him who implanted them. He is the author, and we look to him as the finisher of our faith. And who can this be but the Almighty? The apostle tells us, that no less than a Divine nature can secure salvation to the human. See how things are joined together, and how little room there is for any inglorious distinction between "Him that sits on the throne, and the Lamb." "We pray for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power; that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ," 2 Thess. i. 11, 12.

There is a great deal of pains taken to show, that the Scripture has never attributed the work of creation to a Redeemer; and there must be a great deal more, before they are able to cast a cloud upon the evidence we have for it. But if there is any doubt about that, here is a much greater work, and which is evidently Divine, that claims him as an Author. And would that God, whose name is "jealous," suffer those actions that are his chief glory, to be mentioned as belonging to a creature? Certainly "he that has wrought us for the selfsame thing is God," 2 Cor. v. 5. Our preservation is ascribed to a Redeemer, and yet we can depend upon no less than "the grace of God," that shall keep us "through faith unto salvation." Our Saviour begs, "Father, keep through thine own name, those whom thou hast given me." And yet this is the very thing that he promises upon the foundation of his own authority. They are my sheep "and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand," John x. 28—30. And though he adds, "My Father who

gave them me is greater than all, and none shall pluck them out of my Father's hand;" yet he does not say this to contradict his own equality with God. He immediately retrieves what some people desire should be lost, that he and his "Father are one." And if he did not mean by it what the words do plainly import, there was no occasion for the Jews to take up stones, and charge him with blasphemy, "because that he being a man had made himself God." For though he tells them that some in their law were called gods, yet he distinguished himself from them; they were people "to whom the word of God came," creatures, subjects, and dependents; but he was "sanctified, and sent into the world." He does not claim the title by virtue of an office, but saith, "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not." It was not for doing any good works, that their kings were called gods, but merely on account of their station; but he avows himself to be a God, as doing "the works of the Father." Not because the Father had appointed them, for that every good man, and especially every prophet, might have said; but such as none but the Father could do: "Though ye believe not me, believe the works, that ye may know and believe," what? that he is commissioned and sent into the world? No; but that "the Father is in me, and I in him," John x. 38.

Thus the Spirit leads us to a dependence upon him, for that which none but a God can do. "We look for the mercy of the Lord Jesus unto eternal life." Now, it is certain, "power belongs unto *God*, also unto him belongs mercy;" and "the gift of *God* is eternal life." And therefore when he had directed us to look to Christ, he concludes with a doxology that tells us who he is; "now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy," (these works are frequently attributed to Christ, he will "present the church to himself;" and yet he who is capable of doing this is) "the only wise God our Saviour; to whom be glory and majesty, domi-

nion and power, both now and ever, Amen," Jude 24, 25.

6. The Spirit leads us to him, as one entitled to all the glory of another world. "I overcame," saith he, "and am set down with my Father upon his throne," Rev. iii. 21. "He shall glorify me; for he shall take of mine, and show it unto you." *All* that the Father has is mine, and therefore I said, he shall take of mine;" as if he should say, I speak of that fulness that I have equally with the Father. He went up "far above all heavens, that he might fill all things." This is not speaking of him as a creature. What shuffling and mingling of senses is there, when we talk of the worship that was given him on earth! and yet the Scripture makes no difference between what is paid to the Father and to him in heaven. Can every creature in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and in the sea, do any more than say, "blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be to him that sits on the throne?" and yet the same do they ascribe "unto the Lamb for ever," Rev. v. 13, Is there any more in the first part of the song of Moses and the Lamb, "great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty," Rev. xv. 3, than there is in the last, "just and true are all thy ways, thou King of saints?" Thus he that is "justified in the Spirit" appears to be God; but nevertheless this is a *mystery* that man's wisdom teaches not.

V. This, as well as the former branch of our religion, comes within the character that is given of the whole, that it is "a mystery of Godliness;" which I shall consider in both the parts of it: first, show that it is a *mystery*, and only to be understood by the light that comes from above; and, secondly, that it prepares and leads to *godliness;* it animates and guides our practice, and helps us to do God's will, as well as to receive his word.

1st. It is a thing mysterious in its own nature, that he who was "manifest in the flesh" should be "justified in the Spirit." There is a great deal that human reason will have to object against it; nor can it be

known any other way, than by the revelation that God has given us in his word. From those writings alone I shall endeavour to lay it before you; for I am sure that book is our only rule, in following the work of the Spirit upon the souls of men; the descriptions we meet with in the Bible have their counterpart in the experience of a believer. "Ye have obeyed from the heart the form of doctrine εἰς ὃν παρεδοθητε, into which you are delivered," Rom. vi. 17.

Now, that the great Saviour of the world should be "justified in the Spirit" is a *mystery*, as you will see by the consideration of these particulars. 1. It is strange that he should carry on his design by dying, which seems to be the way of losing it. 2. It is mysterious that he should be owned by the Father at the time that we thought him forsaken. 3. It is more a wonder that the thing which seemed to hinder the faith of men, should afterwards encourage it. 4. It is again a mystery, that he who appeared at his death as if he was entirely in the enemies' hands, should so soon after declare his own power at the resurrection. 5. The manner of the Spirit's justifying him in the soul that was filled with prejudice against him, is very mysterious. 6. The success of this work in the heart of a believer, its victory over all opposition, and its perseverance to the end, makes another part of this wonder.

1. One testimony given to our blessed Lord was concerning his death; and you may look upon it as a mystery, that he should take such a way to carry on his design, as all mankind imagined would be fatal to it. "The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness;" and yet "the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God stronger than men." He appears as the Captain of our salvation. As God laid help upon him, so we are told that he is "mighty to save." Though he was promised as the "seed of the woman" in the early voice of the gospel, to signify the weakness and frailty of the nature that he took upon him; yet it was then affirmed, that he should bruise the serpent's head. And what could

we expect from such a promise, but that he would make the clouds his chariot, and come attended with the armies of heaven, that it might be said, as it used to be, "Honour and majesty are before him, strength and beauty are in his sanctuary?" that he should put on righteousness as a breast-plate, and a helmet of salvation upon his head, the garments of vengeance for clothing, and be clad with zeal as a cloak?" Ps. xcvi. 6; Isa. lix. 17.

But when he became "in all things like unto his brethren," it was, "that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Heb. ii. 14, 15. The rescue that he determined to give his people from their greatest enemy and their darkest fears, was noble, divine, and worthy of himself; but the way that he took to do it is what no wisdom of man would have found out. That his falling by Satan should be triumphing over him, that losing his forces should be getting the battle, is a strange way of conquering. It is said of the devil, that he "he had the power of death;" and if a Redeemer is stronger than he, we should have thought he would spoil his armour, and take from him that wherein he trusted, and let it be seen that he should no longer have the command of such an important evil. And therefore, if in this battle, he that undertook to deliver us should not be able to save himself, we could have nothing to admire in him but his good wishes, and bewail the miscarriage of a gracious purpose. Upon his own dying, we must conclude, that he who had the power of death had obtained power over him; nor does he seem to deny it, as he says to the Jews, "This is your hour, and the power of darkness;" i. e. now the combination of hell and earth against me will succeed.

And yet by falling he conquered, by dying he lived, and gave success to the great design which his enemies thought was lost; for though he was crucified through weakness, yet he lives by the power of God. It is thus that he delivered his people, not only from

their real danger, but the terrible apprehensions they have of it, that fear of death through which they are "all their lifetime subject to bondage." This he did by his own death. It is strange that his dying under so much darkness and horror, should be a means to make it easier for us; that because he cried after a departed God, and bore the weight of an avenging law, our fears should therefore be over; and yet in this he is "justified by the Spirit." The ways he took to bring about the great salvation were rightly chosen, and effectual to all the benefits that he had in his view. "For this cause he is the Mediator of the New Testament, that by means of death they who are called may receive the promise of eternal inheritance." Heb. ix. 15.

2. It is a mystery that he should be owned by the Father, at the same time that he thought himself forsaken. It used to support him under all the sufferings of life, that he who sent him was with him, the Father had not left him alone, John viii. 29. So he could tell his disciples, "the hour comes when ye shall be scattered every man to his own, and shall leave me alone; yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me," John xvi. 32. He could say over the grave of Lazarus, "I thank thee that thou hast heard me, and I knew that thou hearest me always." But this Divine presence, or at least the delightful sensations that attended it; this that had been his perpetual security, was to fail him at last; and he who had so often professed his assurance of the Father's care, must cry out upon the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

The passage is taken out of the xxii Psalm, which is directed to the chief musician upon *Aijeleth Shahar*, i. e. "the hind of the morning;" and it seems to bear this allusion, because the person whose miseries are there described was like a chased hart, almost run down, gasping, fainting, without any dawn of help from the whole creation. Like a creature so dead-run does he represent his own case. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The address is

very moving; he pleads a propriety in God; he repeats it, "*My* God *my* God;" as much as to say, "I am certainly thine, and more thine than any one else can be, and yet thou hast forsaken me." The psalmist pursues the meditation. "Why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? O my God, I cry in the day-time, and thou hearest not, and in the night-season, and am not silent." As the lamentation stands here at large, we must take it for the anguish of his soul, under a sense of the Father's departure from him; and by the vehemence with which it is repeated, we may suppose it continued for some time.

And yet, even then, the Father owned him in the most effectual way; that is, he received the offering that Christ made of himself. He was then "a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour;" he had "a joy set before him;" there was a Divine influence upon every groan; for "through the eternal Spirit he offered himself without spot to God," Heb. ix. 14. Here then is a mystery, that the Father should be present with him, when he himself complains that he had forsaken him. Had God indeed withdrawn from him, and not accepted an offering at his hand, all those torments had been in vain, and the blood of the covenant proved no better than "an unholy thing." But in the hour of his distress, when "it *pleased* the Lord to bruise him, and put him to grief," Isa. liii. 10, he was then the dearest to Divine Justice; as by those agonies he brought in a righteousness for his own glory, and our acceptance. He was then doing the most desirable service to the holiness of God; shedding a blood that should purify heaven itself, and make ready a numerous people to inhabit it. "The heavenly things themselves were purified with this better sacrifice; and through the blood of the everlasting covenant, was the great Shepherd of the sheep brought again from the dead, Heb. xiii. 20.

3. Another mystery is this, that the very thing which seemed to hinder the faith of men, should afterwards encourage it: I mean, the death of our blessed

Lord. Whenever he spoke of this, though at a distance, there went off a great shoal of proselytes; nay the very twelve used to be shocked at it. They rebuked him for it, they mourned over it, "sorrow filled their hearts," and became unwieldy to them. When the time came on that he must be delivered up, they forsook him and fled away. They could not endure the thoughts of the cross. All of them were offended because of him that night; the Shepherd was smitten, and the sheep of the flock scattered abroad. And would not every one imagine that a circumstance so frightful beforehand, should be scandalous afterwards? that they would never allow themselves to remember the vile way in which their Saviour died?

But instead of that they make no secret of it; they mention the ill usage he had from the Jews with satisfaction. It is observed, that as he showed them his hands and his side, then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord, John xx. 20. And though Thomas did not believe, yet his unbelief turns quite another way than it used to do. He is so far from being terrified with the thoughts of our Lord's dying upon the cross, that he rather makes it a condition. "Except I see the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." And the rest made no secret of it, that their chief priests and rulers delivered him to be condemned to death. Might it not have been expected, that the Jews would give out that as a reproach to the whole party, 'These are the disciples of him that was crucified;' and insult their faith with the scandalous death of their Master? And the people who were afraid to see him die, could not be the most prepared to stand this banter. But it proved quite otherwise with them: they owned all this in their argument. "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree." Before this, their eyes were blinded; they could not see that such a form of death was described in any of the prophets. But it was no longer a stumbling block to them after the resurrection, as Paul and Barnabas told the Jews at Antioch. "They that

dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew not him, nor yet the voices of the prophets that are read every Sabbath day, have fulfilled them in condemning him. And though they found no cause of death in him, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain. And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a sepulchre."

This was so far from being the matter of their concern or shame, that the apostle tells the Corinthians, he determined to know nothing among them "save Jesus Christ and him *crucified.*" And as to his own practice, he durst not glory in any thing but *the cross* of Christ, whereby the world was crucified to him, and he to the world. This preaching of the cross was "to them that perish foolishness." The Jews made it "a stumbling block," and the Greeks entertained it with contempt; but "to them that are called both Jews and Greeks, Christ," as so crucified, was "the wisdom of God, and the power of God." You will easily conceive, that when they used to tell mankind of a Redeemer who was capable of saving them, and gave them a long account of the miracles that he wrought, and especially when they themselves did wonders in his name, it would raise the expectations of the people. But when they came to that part of the story, that this Almighty Lord was crucified, that he who brings others to glory, fell himself into shame and torment, it could not fail to startle all that heard it. We should have thought that branch of the report had better have been left out.

But it was this that drew such vast numbers after him. Nicodemus was a disciple of Jesus, but he durst not make a public profession. That which brought him first to our Lord, was the miracles that he wrought. "No man can do the things that thou doest, except God be with him." Now, who could think that such a one should take courage at the death of Christ? and yet he comes with a great provision of sweet spices to anoint his body. Nay, Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple secretly for fear of

the Jews, begins to open his profession when we should have thought it was time to close it. He went boldly to Pilate, and begged the body, and put it into his own new tomb. The Scripture was indeed fulfilled, that the Shepherd should be smitten, and the sheep scattered; and so they were for a time: but those fears gave way, and that little flock that used to run as far as they could from danger, now can meet it all. "They rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name, and daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus Christ," Acts v. 41, 42.

4. It is still further a mystery that he who appeared at his death, as if he was entirely in the enemies' hands, should soon after declare his own power at the resurrection. They took him and dragged him from one to another; from Pilate to Herod, and from Herod to Pilate. He is abused by the soldiers, insulted by the rabble, and pursued with a charge of capital crimes by the priests: they put upon him what vesture they please, and make a jest of his authority by the purple robe: they expose him by a crown of thorns: they lay upon him the whole weight of his cross, which was a burden too heavy for him to bear: they nail him to it, they pierce his hands and his feet; and it seems altogether at their own choice, whether they will break his bones or no. Though there was a secret design of God which protected him from that, yet it is more than they knew. They give him vinegar to drink; they open his side with a spear; and, in short, do what they please. Never did a person seem to be less at his own disposal; "a worm, and no man." "He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb so he opened not his mouth." They took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulchre, i. e. Pilate gave leave for Joseph to do it; and yet after this, he made it very evident they had no more to do with him.

Now, who could believe it of a person so helpless and passive, that in the space of three days no guards

could secure him? that he who had never an angel to protect him from death, should have their united assistance at the resurrection? "He loosed the pains of death, it not being possible that he should be holden of it." How is this conceivable of one that died? Why could not he lie in the grave, who had already suffered on the cross? Why must not that body "see corruption" which had felt the sorrows of death? We should have thought that preventing those pains of death would have declared his majesty more than loosing them afterwards. The Jews began to mutter a peevish argument upon Lazarus's death. "Why could not this man who opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?" And such sort of thoughts are apt to rise in the carnal mind. Why was there so very little of his power shown before, and so much afterwards?

Now, the Spirit makes this mystery sit easy upon the believer. We are convinced, that such a forlorn and helpless way of dying, answered the great atonement that he was to make; and that it became him, who was of the seed of David according to the flesh, to be "declared the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead," Rom. i. 4. It is evident from the whole, that the contrivance is all Divine. We should never have laid matters together that way, but made his majesty more uniform and continued. However, thus "it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings," Heb. ii. 10.

5. The manner of the Spirit's justifying Christ in a soul that was filled with prejudice against him, is very mysterious. The apostle has observed with a great deal of justice, that by nature we are "children of wrath," as appears by our having a conversation among them, and "fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind," Eph. ii. 3. These lusts of the mind are what he calls in another place strong holds, and imaginations, and high things, that exalt them-

selves against the knowledge of God, 2 Cor. x. 5. Our Saviour intimates the difficulty of the case, when he says, "Blessed is he whoever shall not be offended in me." He knew that as Satan was his enemy, so there was a great deal that he both might and would throw into the imaginations of the world. We may say, "Who has believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" The carnal mind is most certainly enmity against God, and does not know the things of God; nay, they are foolishness to him, because they are spiritually discerned, 1 Cor. ii. 14. It is no wonder if our gospel be hid to them that are lost, in whom the god of this world blinds the eyes of them that believe not, 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4.

And what is it that gives the ministers of the word success, and makes them a savour of God in them that believe? I answer, God makes us able ministers of the New Testament; not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. Our sufficiency is of him; but how shall we describe it? Is it not mysterious that all those reasonings which seem so very strong and clear, are gone as the morning cloud, and licked up as the early dew? and that not in the way that we should have expected? Perhaps an unbeliever stands it out against the most powerful arguments; none of these can reach him; and yet at last he falls, as Ahab did, by a bow drawn at a venture, and an arrow that comes in at the joints of the harness, without any aim in him that shot it.

Thus we have sometimes known, that a plain practical sermon has done more to convince a soul of revealed religion, than all the disputations that have been laboured with art and zeal. You will seldom meet with an argument better turned than that which the poor man used when our Lord had given him his sight, and yet we do not find that it did any manner of good. When the Pharisees tell him, that this Jesus is a sinner, he puts by that blow, "Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not; one thing I know, that whereas I was blind now I see." They rally him

again. "We know that God spake to Moses, as for this fellow, we know not from whence he is." And his answer is as short. "Herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he has opened my eyes." But notwithstanding the clearness of the argument, and the honest way that the poor man had of working it, there is never a Pharisee convinced, nor are his own parents persuaded; for the fear of excommunication makes them not dare tell a plain story, how their son who was born blind came now to see.

And yet we find what a run the conviction had afterwards, when we should have thought it was too late to expect any thing of that nature. At the day of Pentecost the Spirit is poured out. Peter explains that dispensation; tells them that Jesus of Nazareth was a man approved of God among them, by signs, and miracles, and wonders, that God did by him in the midst of them, as they also knew. He then goes on with an account of his resurrection, and concludes upon the whole, "Let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that this same Jesus whom ye have crucified, has God made both Lord and Christ," Acts ii. 36. Now, though this is no more than what they might have been told several times, yet it is like the rising of the sun, all darkness flies before it. And the change begins in the conscience. It was not merely the removing of a mistake, or an error, but they speak of it as a practical matter. "They were pricked in their hearts, and said to Peter, and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Thus the Spirit convinced them of *sin*, because they believed not in Christ. These proselytes are worth having; and if the work does not take hold here, it signifies nothing. There is a great deal of difference between a man's being able to prove the Divine nature and credentials of a Messiah, and his coming to him as his own Saviour. That was the case with these Jews. "They gladly received the word and were baptized; and the same day there were added to them about three thousand souls."

And so it is in our day; there needs no more to remove the arguments that are brought against the Christian religion, than for people to be awakened into a concern about eternity. The complaint against the apostles at Philippi was, that these men being Jews, did exceedingly trouble the city; but when the jailor cries out, "Sirs, What must I do to be saved?" they bid him "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ;" "and he rejoiced, believing in God with all his house." He that feels the corruption of his nature, and knows himself to be undone, will no longer make a jest of being found in the righteousness of another. The method of justification by faith, may well be the contempt of those who know no danger from sin; it is like sending a physician to a man in health. But all the critical learning, the nice reasoning, the free ways of thinking, give way when conscience tells the soul that he who saves him is JEHOVAH our righteousness. It will be with them as it was with the apostle, "The things that were gain to me, I found to be loss; yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ," Phil. iii. 7, 8. I do count them but σκυβαλα, *offals*, *dogs-meat*, fitter for them than for me. He had lost his taste and relish of that which he used to admire. This will be more evident from the next head.

6. The success of this work in the heart of a believer. When the Spirit has justified Christ in the manner I have told you, the conviction proclaims itself; it is like the sun that appears in its own evidence. The God of hope fills them with all joy and peace in believing. This is a mystery to the Christian himself, and may well be so to others. He knows not how to believe the very change that he feels. It is like seed in the ground, which, whilst a man sleeps and rises, night and day, springs and grows up he knows not how. Here is no force upon his will, and yet he feels something that is irresistible, a day of God's "power." He is drawn, and yet he runs.

Here is a necessity upon him, but you must not say he is dragged along with it. He makes a free choice, he would not do otherwise, and yet in some sense, he cannot do otherwise.

How soon was the turn given to Saul? he cries out, "Who art thou, Lord?" and presently after, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Here is no time taken to unravel the prejudice that was so entangled. He had profited in the Jewish religion above many his equals in his own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of his fathers; but when it pleased God to reveal his Son in him, that he might preach him among the heathen, immediately he conferred not with flesh and blood. We should have thought, there must have been a gradual recovery to show him the mistake of his former arguments. He must see by degrees, that the Messiah was to come out of Nazareth, and not have an earthly power. No, this is done all at once; all the lectures of the Pharisees are answered in a moment. "All that heard him were amazed, and said, Is not this he who destroyed them that called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests?" This remark they make upon his preaching straitway in the synagogues, that "Christ is the Son of God:" nay, the work was a mystery to the disciples themselves, first at Damascus, and afterwards at Jerusalem; for, says he, I was unknown by face unto the churches of Judea, that were in Christ, only they heard that he who persecuted us in times past, now preaches the faith that he once destroyed; and they glorfied God in me, Gal. i. 22—24.

I will make a short application of what has been said.

1. If the justification of Christ in the Spirit is such a mystery, it is no wonder that the honour of our Lord is so much struck at. "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost," 1 Cor. xii. 3. And therefore when we see men "do despite to the Spirit of grace," when they take all the pains they

can to stifle every thought of practical religion, when they represent the fears of persons about their own salvation as so many whims, and the comforts of the Spirit as a delusion; in a word, when they give up themselves to sensuality, and treat with scorn those that will not run to the same excess of riot, these are enemies to the Holy Ghost, and in open war against him. And is it likely that he should teach those persons the doctrines of religion, who would never learn of him the practice? How should it be thought that a drunkard, a Sabbath-breaker, or one that wanders out of the way of understanding, is taught of God? Now, is it likely that men who live as without God in the world, with no prayer in their families, no conversation with their Bibles, should be the best masters of argument about the deep mysteries of godliness? To suppose that God makes them wise, is to suppose that he steps out of his way, and works without the use of means, that he imparts of his treasures to an enemy, and furnishes a weapon against himself. No, he rather gives over those that do not like to retain him in their knowledge, to a reprobate mind. "To the unbelieving nothing is pure, but their mind and conscience is defiled. They profess to know God, but in works deny him, being abominable, disobedient, and to every good work reprobate," Rom. i. 28; Tit. i. 15, 16. When persons are more in Saul's first inquiry, "Who art thou, Lord?" than in the second, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" there is not much to be expected from them; and to imagine that the truth is in their souls, is to suppose that God throws his pearls into a dunghill. We are told of mockers, who walk after their own ungodly lusts. These be they that separate themselves, sensual, and having not the Spirit, Jude 18, 19.

2. This shows us how vain all the ways of promoting the knowledge of Christ will be, that are not agreeable to the Spirit. We may see how little can be expected in defence of the doctrine, from a party of men who have done all they could to abuse the work of the Spirit, both in the ordinances of the gos-

pel, and the souls of believers. Though "praying by the Spirit" is so often mentioned in Scripture, yet the language is become a jest, and a man will be laughed at if he does but name it; and this not only by a noisy multitude, but such as pretend to know better. And are these the men from whom we are to have the truth as it is in Jesus? who have set up their own fancies above the Divine institutions, and lay as great a weight upon an opinion that never was revealed, as they can upon that which is? of which we have a notorious instance in an author, who in his book against the deists, proves that Jesus must be the Messiah from the miracles that he wrought, and that these were done in a public way, and that our evidence of this is by a succession of bishops from the apostles; which is laying the most important affair upon the greatest uncertainty in the world.

2d. This branch of our religion is proper to animate the whole duty of life. When He who was manifest in the flesh, is justified in the Spirit, when God reveals his Son in us as an all-sufficient Saviour, it does not only fill us with a holy wonder, but it makes us abound in the work of the Lord. We follow after, that we may apprehend that for which we are apprehended of Christ Jesus.

You will see that it is a mystery of *Godliness*, by considering the influence it has upon the following principles; our reverence to God, our care to please him, the humble thoughts we should have of ourselves, our charity to others, the peace and hope that runs through our lives, and our preparation for a dying hour. These are the chief articles of practical piety, and whatever promotes them must be of the greatest importance. Now, you will find that the testimony which the Holy Spirit gives in our souls to the character, the capacity and goodness of a Redeemer, will do us service in all the particulars that I have mentioned.

1. By this we learn to approach with reverence to Him with whom we have to do. This is a tribute to God's majesty; but yet it has the best directions from

his goodness; nor can it be maintained without some hopes of an interest in him, and a conviction of the forgiveness and mercy that is with him. The devils have it not; they behold and feel his greatness, and the power of his anger; for according to his fear, so is his wrath; but this is no devotional temper. Though they "believe and tremble," they cannot come before him with the spirit of sons; and therefore the fear that the people of God are conducted by, is distinguished from theirs. It is called "a godly fear;" and the ground upon which it is raised, is a covenant where the devils have no lot or portion. "We receiving a kingdom that cannot be moved, let us have grace to serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear; for our God is a consuming fire." Where you find by the turn of the argument, that though the religion of a good man falls under the influence of God's majesty, and looks upon him as a consuming fire, yet at the same time it is enlivened by the thoughts of what his mercy has done in and through a Redeemer. Thus the apostle argues, that "all things are naked and open to the eyes of him with whom we have to do. Seeing then that we have a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession." Heb. iv. 13, 14. When the Holy Spirit does his office in glorifying the Son, by taking of his, and showing it unto us, he commands every loose and idle thought. This being the King who sits upon the holy hill of Zion, we are to serve him with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Psal. ii. 6. 11.

Though it is a common objection against the doctrine of free grace, that it teaches people an unbecoming boldness to their Maker; yet I believe the experience of every Christian tells him quite the contrary. "There is *forgiveness* with thee," saith the psalmist, "that thou mayest be *feared*." God never appeared so great to his soul, as when the view was taken under that character. "With the Lord there is mercy, and with our God is plenteous redemption." So it is promised, when a Redeemer comes to be bet-

ter known, that the children of Israel should "seek the Lord their God, and David their king, and they shall fear the Lord, and his goodness in the latter days," Hos. iii. 5. It is apparent to all observation, that they who are aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, who have no hope, are persons that live as without a God in the world, Eph. ii. 12.

Now, the reverence that fills our minds to him whose we are, and whom we serve, comes by faith in a Saviour. We call on the Father, who without respect of persons judges according to every man's work, and so pass the time of our sojourning here in fear: forasmuch as we know that our redemption is by the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish, and without spot, 1 Pet. i. 17—19. You see in what method the work goes on. I will sing of the mercies of the Lord. I said, mercy shall be built up for ever; thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens; and from hence we conclude, that great fear is due to the Lord in the assembly of his saints, and he is to be had in reverence of those that are about him, Psal. lxxxix. 1, 2. 7.

How different was the temper of Saul, after Christ had revealed himself to him, from what it had been before! and yet he never lived loose from all professions of duty, as you may safely imagine, because he was "blameless touching the righteousness that is in the law." But when he found the necessity of looking to God in and through a Redeemer, he stood "trembling and astonished:" his heart was more bowed to the Divine will than ever it had been. And indeed there are no discoveries in which the greatness of a God does more appear than those that belong to our salvation. Isaiah saw the glory of a Redeemer, and spake of him as sitting upon a throne high and lifted up, with his train filling the temple; the house was clouded with smoke, the posts of the door did shake at the voice of him that spake, Isa. vi. 1, 2. 4. And the prophet himself, who must be glad at the vision, is yet borne down with the mag-

nificence of the mercy, and cries out, "Woe is me, for I am undone!" He cries out "Undone," at the sight of that which saved him. It is not the language of despair; the only meaning of the words is, that the glory of the design was too much for him. There was something so great in this revelation of the Divine mercy, that it makes him more sensible than he ever had been, that he was "a man of unclean lips." What was it that he saw of a Saviour then? for the evangelist tells us, that he saw *his* glory, and spake of *him*, John xii. 41. Under what title? that which belongs to none but the Most High, "the King, the Lord of hosts."

And so it will be with us. We cannot believe the sufficiency of a Mediator to save us, but at that very moment we are astonished at his perfections. "O Lord of hosts, who is a strong Lord like unto thee, or to thy faithfulness round about thee?" As Jacob in his dream or vision saw a ladder that kept the correspondence open between earth and heaven, the Lord Redeemer was at the top of it, and tells him what concerned his happiness rather than his devotion. I am the God of thy father, and will give thee the land whereon thou liest: I will be with thee in the way that thou goest, and will bring thee back in peace. He is struck with the discovery, and feels other impressions besides those of joy. "How dreadful is this place! Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not. This is no other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven," Gen. xxviii. 16, 17.

If God is justified in our spirits, it will fill us with a care to please him. It is very hard for me to set those bounds that some people speak of, between the duty that is owing to the Father, and that which is claimed by the Son. If the one is only a creature, no brightness or perfection can make his distance from the other any less than infinite; and therefore he is by no means to have the homage that is due alone to the Divine nature. Such a worship as that would be idolatry. May we not therefore look

for plain distinctions to settle our carriage to the Father and the Son, that the gospel may not betray us into that very crime that was so abominable under the law? The God who is so jealous of his honour, and told his people that they should not bow to the likeness of any thing in heaven or earth, or under the earth; that they should have no other God before him; has certainly left us under no snare, by any unguarded direction in the New Testament. One of the last orders there, is from the angel who would not suffer the apostle to fall down before him, but bids him "worship God," Rev. xxii. 9.

Sometimes indeed God joins himself with another, and tells us, in the same word, of the duty that we owe to both; but there the case is so plain, that we are in no danger of mistaking. As when it is said, the children of Israel "believed the Lord and his servant Moses," we must of necessity understand it of a different faith. So when David saith to Abigail, "blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who sent thee this day to meet me; and blessed be thy advice and blessed be thou:" though he uses the same word in all the three parts of his declaration, yet it cannot possibly be taken in less than three senses. So again, when we are bid to "fear the Lord and the king," can any mortal suppose it is with the same fear? The apostle saith of the Macedonians, that they "gave up themselves to the Lord, and to us by the will of God." The expression must have two meanings. In these places, and several others, the same word is to be taken in various senses.

But this will by no means be our protection from running into idolatry, if he who was manifest in the flesh is not "God over all blessed for evermore." The Scripture has not done as the angel did at Mount Sinai, set guards about the Divine honour. He is all along represented as partner in it. "Ye believe in God, believe also in me," John xiv. 1. I do not deny but a minister, a good man, and especially an angel, may use those words, that if ye believe in God, believe that I am sent by him; but can any serious

person think, that when Christ said it to his drooping disciples, that it meant no more as it came out of his mouth, than it would out of theirs? He brings it in as an argument, that their hearts should not be troubled.

And so that passage, "that all men may honour the Son as they honour the Father; he that honours not the Son, honours not the Father who has sent him," John v. 23. It is a very short answer that the word *as* does not signify equality; for which we have this instance given, "as the Father has sent me, so send I you:" for according to that interpretation, Christ then saith no more of himself than what any preacher or believer upon earth may say, that all men are to honour a minister who comes in the name of God, *as* they honour the Father that sent him; and he that honours the one, honours the other. Though the words may be twined and bended into a good humble sense, yet how do you imagine they would sound? Can the phrase of honouring the Son as we honour the Father, mean no more than a similitude, as it may do if applied to an angel or a man? Are we to take the word in this place as we do in others? How comes that then to be given as the reason of it; that as the Father raises up the dead, and quickens them, so the Son quickens whom he will: that the Father judges no man, but has committed all judgment to the Son, that all men should honour the Son as they honour the Father? John v. 21, 22. Can any one imagine, that the manner of the expression is the same here with that which it is compared to; "As the Father sends me, so send I you?" If we are not to take the phrase in this full sense in one place, because it may be taken in a lower sense in another, there is not any proposition that we can prove out of the Bible. Except we utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken, for we shall speak into the air, 1 Cor. xiv. 9.

If I may be allowed to expound these Scriptures that give us the titles of the Father, in the way that

some do those that lay down the very same words of the Son, we shall not have one text left to prove a God at all. As for example, when we read of our Mediator, that he is called "the Mighty God," the force of the argument is taken off with this, that the name may be given to a creature. Why may not an Atheist use the same liberty with one text, as these do with another, and tell us as roundly, that those words, Psal. l. "The mighty God, even the Lord has spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun," are to be understood of a king or an angel? And further, when it is said of Christ, that he shall be called "the Everlasting Father," and that "his goings forth have been of old from everlasting," may you not put the same inglorious limitations upon the title that is given to God, when he is said to be "the Ancient of days?" Dan. vii. 13. It is true, the word *everlasting* is used of creatures, and there it must be taken in a narrower sense. But if that is the reason why it is to be so understood when applied to Christ, another set of people may with the same assurance say, that it means no more when we read, "from everlasting to everlasting thou art God." Psal. xc. 2.

What ground have we to imagine when the apostle saith, "I am not without law to God, but under the law to Christ," 1 Cor. ix. 21: that we are to distinguish upon his words, as we do between fearing God and the king? At his conversion he cries out, "Who art thou, Lord?" And when he knew it was no other than Jesus of Nazareth, he nevertheless inquires of him, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" and yet it is certain, that he worshipped no other than "the God of his fathers." He tells us, that "whether we live, we live unto the Lord, or whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether therefore we live or die, we are the Lord's." What Lord is this? you will see in the next words: "For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that *he* might be the Lord both of dead and living. We must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, because it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to

me, and every tongue shall confess to *God;* so then every one of us shall give an account of himself to God," Rom. xiv. 8—12.

Will it not be very hard for an honest humble Christian, who has had no education, or opportunity to be master of critical learning, to read exactly the same things demanded by the Father and the Son, and be told that one of them is but a creature? He thinks it is his God that speaks; "Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will hear thee," Psal. l. 15.—the same Lord upon whom men began to call so long ago. Now, what way can such a one have to divest the word of the same sense, when he reads of people in every place calling upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours? 1 Cor. i. 2. So when we are told, that he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the *Lord's* freeman; likewise he that is called being free, is *Christ's* servant? 1 Cor. vii. 22. It may be answered, that this is a profession we make to creatures, and a relation that we come into with men. Well it is true; but one would imagine, that though the word is so used in other places, it cannot be in this, because the very next verse gives a reason for it. "Ye are bought with a price; be ye not servants of men:" and therefore we are "Christ's servants," in a way that we cannot be theirs. I dare not say as David did to any other than God, "Lord, truly I am thy servant, I am thy servant."—Thus does the Spirit justify Him who was manifest in the flesh: he fills us with a desire to please him: we are his people, and are made "willing in the day of his power." We worship him in the beauty of holiness: he is your Lord, and therefore we worship him.

3. This gives us humble thoughts of ourselves. Nothing shows the vileness of human nature so much as the dispensation of the gospel. "Boasting is excluded, not by the law of works, but by the law of faith," Rom. iii. 27. The excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord, makes the principles we used to value, no more than loss, and no better than dung. The dearer Christ is to my soul, the viler

shall I be to myself. Thus the apostle after he was illuminated tells us, he was not meet to be called by that name; that to him, who was less than the least of all saints, was this grace given, that he should preach the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see, what is the fellowship of the mystery, that from the beginning of the world has been hid in God, 1 Cor. xv. 8, 9; Eph. iii. 8, 9. As you heard under the former head, the prophet cries out "undone." Why? because he was "a man of unclean lips, and dwelt in the midst of a people of unclean lips." Did he never feel that conviction before? yes surely; but it never came with that power upon his mind as when he stood in the contemplation of a Saviour. And it was the glory of his person as well as the design of his grace and love, that had made this impression. "Mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." He speaks of him under the same title that David gave him;—I speak of things touching the King, Psal. xlv. 1.

It is true, the mere name proves no Divinity, because it is given to creatures; but the question is, whether it can be understood of any less than a God here; for it is said of him, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." The church is considered as his spouse. "The King shall greatly desire thy beauty, for he is thy Lord, and worship thou him." And within the compass of two verses, she is called "the King's daughter;" of whom nevertheless it is said, "she shall be brought unto the King." Why is the same title given promiscuously to the Father and the Son, if we may not have it expounded here, as it is in other places, that "God is King of all the earth," "and a great King above all gods," Ps. xlvii. 7; xcv. 3. Isaiah was humbled in his own eyes, when he saw him in that glory. It is of him they speak in those words, "The King's strength loves judgment;" and in the song of the Lamb, "Just and true are all thy ways, thou King of saints," Psal. xcix. 4; Rev. xv. 3.

4. This inspires us with charity to others. That is one fruit of the humility I mentioned under the

former head; for only by pride comes contention, but with the lowly advised, is wisdom. Whether Christ is revealed in us or no, will appear as much in our temper as it does in our principles. A person may have clear notions about the Scripture doctrines, and a happy way of bringing them into light; but if he feels any thing of this upon his own soul, it will keep him from passion as much as it can do from error. A man that wrangles and behaves himself unseemly, may have the right of the argument; he may prove that "God was manifest in the flesh;" but such a one is no instance that ever he was "justified in the Spirit." Whatever sentiments he has about the sufficiency of Christ's righteousness, and the necessity of depending upon it, yet either he has had no experience of these things, or he has forgot it all. "If these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ; but he that lacketh these things, is blind, and cannot see far off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins," 2 Pet. i. 8, 9.

I may look upon the person who denies the Divinity of Christ to be in a mistake, and give him my reasons why I cannot come into his exposition of several Scriptures; but if I have felt "the power" of that "resurrection" for which I am pleading, and "the fellowship" of those "sufferings" which I defend with my arguments, and am "conformed" to that "death" which I proclaim abroad, it will govern my temper, as well as direct my notions. I have reason to suspect whether my wisdom is pure, if it does not make me peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, James iii. 17. When orthodoxy puts us upon reviling language and cruel imprecations, we are only foaming out our own shame. There is nothing in truth that should make us behave ourselves unseemly. If we cannot "in meekness instruct those that oppose themselves," upon a "peradventure that God may give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth," we are not fit to be the "ser-

vants of the Lord," 2 Tim. ii. 24, 25. Roughness and incivility is one way of answering a heretic, but it will tempt all mankind to think that we have got no other. I do not say, and I never thought it, that in the present awful controversy, which issues in no less than either denying the Lord that bought us, or worshipping and serving the creature equally with the Creator, passion lay on one side of the question, and meekness on the other.

"Knowledge puffeth up," saith the apostle, even a knowledge of the truth; but if we have any experience upon our souls of what we are pleading for, it will have a great command over us. An awakened conscience will put you upon contending earnestly for the truth as it is in Jesus; but it will teach you at the same time, to be "gentle towards all men." Scolding is an evidence that a person comes rather for the plunder of the war, than the success of the cause.

Not that a peaceable temper makes us indifferent to the doctrines of the gospel; no, far from it. I will suppose the case of an enlightened convert, that he approaches to Christ as the God whose throne is for ever and ever; that he depends upon him as having brought in an everlasting righteousness, and that he derives from him as the King of saints. These are notions and principles that he will by no means part with; he finds his soul drawn out into the highest degrees of reverence to a Saviour. If his confidence is in Christ Jesus, it is from a belief that he is the God whom all the ends of the earth shall look to; and if he is not God, the person is not only in an error, but he is struck off from his dependence, he dares not rely on him as the author and finisher of his faith. Now if such a one comes into the argument, it is no wonder that he is tenacious of those principles that enter into his best devotion, and are the support of his greatest hopes; but he is too full of the mystery, to be capable of wrangling about it; it is too much his concern for that; none but people who feel a great deal less than he does, can treat the subject in such

a manner. If the zeal and learning of other persons are opposed to him, and would take him off from the truth that he has received with love, he will hold fast his profession: though perhaps he may not be an equal master of argument, with those who have enlisted themselves in the cause, and devoted their whole study for several years to this controversy; yet he knows from within, in whom he has believed, and will not part with those principles upon which he thinks him able to keep what he has committed to him against that day, 2 Tim. i. 12.

If I ever felt the power of Christ's resurrection, I can bear all the reproaches that we are like to meet with, and that are flowing so fast upon us, on the account of our zeal for him. Of late we have been charged with "setting the Son above the Father," which is an opinion I never so much as heard of, until I met with it in a printed accusation.* And now we are laid under a new scandal, as being a people most inclined to persecution; and the principles that are supposed to lead us into it, are not those by which we have been distinguished, but what we have in common with the established church. It is not our scrupling ceremonies, or an inequality in the office of the ministry, but it is our adherence to the doctrine of my text, that has laid us under these new slanders. And these are not enemies that have reproached us; then we could have borne it; neither is it they who professed to hate us, that have magnified themselves against us; then we could have hid ourselves from them. But it is a man, a guide, an acquaintance, with whom we have taken sweet counsel, and walked to the house of God in company. Our reproach is now "for the name of Christ," 1 Pet. iv. 14.

If we do indeed maintain either this or any other cause with an ungodly rancour, it is wrong; the argument does not need it, and the Spirit of Christ will not bear it. "The wrath of man worketh not the

* Mr. Emlyn's Works, p. 58.

righteousness of God." But of this I am sure, that there is no necessity of speaking the truth in any other way but that of love; and if ever any thing has dropt from my mouth unworthy of the charity which is the end of the commandment, I have done that which I allow not. For though there is none whom I more admire than Christ Jesus my Lord, yet there is nothing I more abhor than persecution in every form and shape. He needs none of my folly and corruption to promote his cause. The argument is certainly as good for him as it was for Baal; if he be a God, he will plead for himself when one has cast down his altar.

5. Another principle that the testimony of the Spirit has an influence upon, is that peace and hope that runs through the lives of believers. It is in enmity to this, that Satan has raised such opposition to the doctrines of the gospel. He grudges the Christian that serenity of mind which himself has lost. He would involve mankind in his own despair, and as he is reserved in chains under darkness, he would have them be so too. To that purpose he takes all imaginable pains, either to prevent this work of the Spirit in our souls, or to divert us from heeding it.

And one way is the method of the present controversy, which is, to demand an explication of what we confess to be mysterious. That is the way to ensnare our faith, and entangle our peace. As, for example, when I am inquired of, whether the "Three that bear record in heaven" are three modes, operations, or infinite minds? these are words which the Scripture has not given me, and therefore I have nothing to say to them. If the question is, whether they are *three*, I can answer, Yes. If I am asked whether they are three *Gods*, I must say, No. But how they are three, and how they are one, I do not pretend to tell. The ways of expression that people have shown their fondness to, and by which they have endeavoured to make it intelligible, have been only so many vain plots against the mysteriousness of the doctrine, and these have proved temporary as they

deserved to do. Creeds have expired, grown old, and been ready to vanish away; they change as ages do; but the "faith once delivered to the Saints" is the same. Thus far the believer is at a point, that he knows upon what his hope is raised. These are principles, which, though he cannot explain, yet they are what his soul flees to; and as ridiculous as a mysterious doctrine may appear to others, it is a foundation of hope to him. His heart is comforted to "the riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ," Col. ii. 2.

6. It prepares him for a dying hour; he dares trust his soul to the care of a Redeemer at last. "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." He looks to him as the finisher of this faith, and therefore his esteem for him must be equal to so great a dependence in the most important act of religion. Thus Christ is "justified in the Spirit," and the reputation he has in the heart of a believer, agrees to his glory above, where he is "seen of angels."

CHAPTER VI.

GOD WAS SEEN OF ANGELS.

This is the third branch of a mystery great without controversy, and gives us a further account of Him who was "manifest in the flesh, and justified in the Spirit." That he is "preached unto the Gentiles, and believed on in the world," shows us the empire that he has below; but his being "seen of angels" is an argument of the glory that he is received into above. These are the highest order of the creation, "the morning stars;" "the sons of God" in a nobler sense of the word than can be affirmed of our nature; and it declares to us the value of this great salvation, that those thinking flames should feel any concern about it. There are three reasons that would move

us to suppose they had no lot or portion in this matter, and therefore must no more regard it than they do the increase of the earth, the returns of spring and summer, and harvest and winter, which is nothing to them who live in a state of equal light and happiness.

First, They have always continued in the perfection and purity of their creation, and therefore had no need of any redemption from God, or any reconciliation to him. It could not be said of them as it was of man, that "the Lord made them upright, but they sought out many inventions." Secondly, As the elect angels never sinned, so those of that nature who left their first habitation, were never to be saved; and therefore though the Son of God had a desire to the works of his hands, yet it was not to any of their number. Thirdly, As an evidence of this, that they were distinguished out of the case, when He came upon the grand expedition of his love, "He verily took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham," Heb. ii. 16. He declared that his concern lay with those children that were partakers of flesh and blood by his own taking part of the same. He was (as no angel ever had been) "made flesh, and dwelt among us." They are neither in our number, nor in our neighbourhood. They do not come into this world, in the way that he did, as inhabitants. A spirit has no flesh and bones, as the disciples saw him to have both.

And yet, though one would have thought these things might have carried off their regard from the work that he came about, and made them look upon the whole affair as what did not belong to them, you find their name is brought into this account of our great Redeemer. He was not only "manifest in the flesh," and in all things made like to his brethren, as a merciful and a faithful high priest, but he is "seen of angels." Theirs was a nature that he slid over, both in his humiliation and his advancement. You will find that their station was something that lay between the one and the other. For in order to the suffering of death, he was made "lower than the

angels," and when he is received up into glory, he is made "so much better than the angels, as he has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they;" and yet you see they are brought into the account that we have of him, as admirers, if not gainers, by the purchase of his mercy, "He was seen of angels."

As this belongs to "the mystery of godliness," so it contains in it something wonderful, and therefore we must look further than the sound of the words. He was seen of men, and when they saw him, there was no form or comeliness in him, that they should desire him, Isa. liii. 2. He was seen of devils; one of them cried out, "I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God:" and therefore if that is all, that the angels were among the spectators of his person and actions, it is not important enough to have a place in this text. There is no mystery in it. But the word must be taken in a larger view, as it comprehends their diligent attention to him, their admiration and delight in him, and the pleasure with which they observed the glory of his merit, the success of his death, and the triumph of his resurrection. I shall proceed upon this head in the following method;

1. Inquire into the meaning of the phrase, what it was for Christ to be "seen of angels."

2. Show that this belongs to him as *God*, for under that title we are carried through the whole account that is given of him. And,

3. That this is a *mystery*, one of the wonders of our religion; and,

4. That it is a mystery of *godliness*. The belief of it makes us better; we are nourished up in the words of good doctrine.

I. What is it for that *God* who was manifest in the flesh, and justified in the Spirit, to be "seen of angels?" I answer, these words show us the esteem they had, first, for his person; and, secondly, for the design that he came about.

1st, We may hence collect the esteem they had for the person of our Lord. I do not here consider his relation to them as a Creator, for he made them, and

not they themselves. "By him were all things created, whether in heaven, or in earth, whether they be thrones or dominions, principalities or powers, all things were created by him, and for him," Col. i. 16. But I shall observe the regard they paid to him as the Mediator between God and man, as "the man Christ Jesus," as one made lower than themselves; and this you will collect from the several parts of his story.

You may see the concern that the angels had at his birth, his baptism, his temptation in the wilderness, his agony, his resurrection, his ascension, and the consequences of that in heaven. In all these times he was nearly attended by the spirits about the throne. A detachment of the heavenly guards was sent down. "Of the angels he saith, who maketh his angels spirits;" this being connected to what the Spirit saith of Christ Jesus, lets us see these two things: First, the nature of the angels, that they are *spirits*, purely and simply so, not embodied, not incarnate; and, secondly, that they are thus made for service, to be capable of more expeditious duty than we can possibly come into. They were made spirits with regard to the Son; their lively and active nature is employed about him. But it is time that I enter upon the particulars under which I am to range my thoughts.

1. He was seen and loved and admired by the angels at his birth. How ready were they to tell the news, and to serve the design? Observe with what a tenderness and caution they do their office: for they knew that the dazzle of their nature would be too much for a conversation with ours; therefore when one of them stands at the right hand of the altar of incense, as Zacharias was there attending in his place, his first work was to take off all fear and trembling; upon which he tells him, that his prayer was heard, and his wife, who was now stricken in years, as well as himself, should have a son. The very naming of that turns the dread into a dispute. Zacharias is more astonished at what he heard, than at what he saw, "Whereby shall I know this, seeing

that I am an old man?" But the angel describes the office of the child who should be born, and does it in such a way that he might well say, "Thou shalt have joy and gladness, and many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord," Luke i. 13—16.

There had been many a prophet and eminent man among them, and yet no such preparations made for his coming into the world; but the reason of all this is, that "many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God, and he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias." Before whom? Before *the Lord God*, to whom he should turn the children of Israel. And who is this Lord their God, before whom he was to go, but He that had "the fulness of the Godhead dwelling in him bodily?" Zacharias seems to make no difficulty of it, when he came to circumcise the child. The Holy Ghost was then upon him, and under that influence he delivers those words, "Thou child shalt be called the prophet of the *Highest;* for thou shalt go before the face of the *Lord* to prepare his ways," Luke i. 67. 76.

There must be a miserable tearing of all the connection that these passages have to one another, before we can suppose that our blessed Saviour himself is not here called the "Lord God of the children of Israel," by the angel, and the "Most High" by Zacharias. And of this John bare witness, I am not the Christ, but am sent before him; as it was said he should go before him. So gentle and kind was this angel, first to take off the fright, and then to give in his message. In the same manner he proceeded with the Virgin Mary. "She was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be." And when he tells her of having a Son, though her objection was much greater than Zacharias's, yet she rests upon that answer, "With God nothing shall be impossible."

How careful, how condescending was it, for Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, thus to talk with poor mortals! The like goodness do they show

at the actual birth of our Lord. "There were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night; and lo the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid." You need not wonder much at that, for this apparition was of another kind from those in the Old Testament. Then angels put on the form of men, so that oftentimes they were taken for no more, till after they had delivered their message. But to these shepherds the angel looked more like himself. However, he soon takes off the fright, or at least mingles something with it, "Fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people: for unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign to you, ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger," Luke ii. 8—12.

Observe, though the manifestation was glorious and frightful, yet the thing told them was important, and what they had long expected; and the sign was as familiar and descriptive as they could desire it to be: so that you see what effect this had upon them: though we cannot suppose they had lost their terror, yet they resolve to make the experiment. There is no such crying out as there was between Manoah and his wife: "alas, we shall die, for we have seen an angel of the Lord!" No, no, but "they said one to another, let us go even now to Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us. And they came with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger." It was a thing that only mere necessity could have occasioned, that a new born child should be thrown into such a place. They in the inn could easily tell how it came about, because there was no other room for them; but that shepherds in a distant field should know this strange accident, and inquire for a child by a token that never happened before, was remarkable. No wonder that "they returned glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen,

as it was told unto them." So well had the ange made himself intelligible to poor unlearned men, who could have no interest in the contrivance of the plot, and no capacity to take a part in it.

How amazing is it, that a creature who stands before God, should deliver himself to a company of shepherds, so as to leave them in no confusion? It shows how hearty he was in the cause he came about. Nay, besides this one, "there was suddenly with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, and good will towards men." Observe, this multitude did not appear at first, for then the shepherds would have been sunk too low to have received any message; but after the angel had gone distinctly through his errand, let them know what had happened, and given them an incontestible rule how they should be assured of it; when he had possessed them of the wole story, then in a moment the rest who longed to begin—the whole multitude of the heavenly host, praised God; when the shepherds could be pleased with it, and not frighted.

And they do it in such a song as could never be conceived to come from those that kept flocks by night. For shepherds to talk of visions and angelical concerts, might be suspected as vain and delusive; but when they bring a song with them so full of the cause it refers to, none can think it was of their own composing, and therefore it is said, "that all they that heard it, wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds."

There are several passages that I might bring under this head, as the angel of the Lord's appearing to Joseph in a dream, and bidding him not to fear to take to him Mary his wife, and giving him that answer to his objection which none but an angel could give him: "That which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost." So again the angel of the Lord appears to him in another dream, and directs him to arise and take the young child and his mother, and go into Egypt, and be there until he brought him

word. And when Herod was dead, this angel appears to him in a dream, the third time, with an order for him to take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel. There is another instance relating to this period, that he is warned again in a dream to turn aside into the parts of Galilee and come and live in a city called Nazareth. So diligent were those angels to convey the news and to serve the design, either by voices or dreams, as the people concerned were prepared to receive them.

2. He was "seen of angels," i. e. admired and loved by them, at his baptism, which was properly his institution or entrance upon the public ministry. He submitted to that ordinance, that he might fulfil all righteousness; and when it was over, heaven opened, the Holy Ghost descended upon him, and a testimony came from thence, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." If heaven opened, you may be sure the angels either came down or gazed through. They who had attended his birth, and sung him into the world; they who had watched him down to Egypt and up again; they who had received a charge concerning him in his youth, in their hands to bear him up; who had encamped round about him, more than they do about every one that fears the Lord; these, I say, would be looking on, when the Spirit came down; first, to give him his qualifications, and then to proclaim his credentials. For as he was anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power, so John himself professes, "I knew him not, but he that sent me to baptize with water, said, upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on him, the same is he who baptizes with the Holy Ghost," John i. 33. They go forth to behold king Solomon with his crown, on the day of his espousals, and the day of the gladness of his heart.

3. At his temptation in the wilderness, or rather after it, he was "seen of angels." He was there forty days and forty nights. He went thither to be tempted of the devil. He submitted to the necessity and torment of nature, for after such long fasting, he hun-

gered. And as Satan had tempted him to work a miracle for bread, and to cast himself down from the temple, (to try whether the angels would observe their charge,) and to worship him for the kingdoms and glories of this world; so when the devil left him, "the angels came and ministered to him," Mat. iv. 11.

What those words comprehend, we are not told in particular; but we may without any danger suppose it from the nature of the temptation, first, that they brought him food; for it was that he wanted, and he told the devil, that "man lived not by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God," i. e. by any other provision that the creation affords; for the word proceeding out of the mouth of God, is there to be understood of the gifts of his hand, as you will find by comparing it with the original passage, Deut. viii. 3. "He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, that he might make thee know that man lives not by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord does man live." Here the *manna* is called a word proceeding out of the mouth of the Lord; and this, you know, has that character given it, that "man did eat angels' food," i. e. the food which they brought. So that it is not improbable, that when they ministered to him, it was to supply his necessity. And as they had received a charge concerning him, in their hands to bear him up, so they carried him safely through the wilderness. They had no occasion to assist him in the conflict, knowing that his own power would bring salvation, and his fury uphold him, Isa. lxiii. 5; but it was their duty and delight to attend him afterwards.

4. At his agony in the garden he was "seen of angels." He was to endure it, and to endure it in his own person, without any assistance from those glorious creatures that wished him well. "He trod the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with him;" and therefore he speaks as one totally deserted. He took no more than three disciples with him, and he withdrew himself even from

them about a stone's cast, but desired them to watch. There he pleads with the Father, and at last submits to him. His disciples are asleep; their eyes are shut, when the pores of his body are opened in a dreadful manner; for "his sweat was as it were great drops of blood;" and then it is observed, "there appeared to him an angel from heaven to strengthen him," Luke xxii. 43, 44. This can be understood of no more than some few supports that were given to his human nature. It was that which recoiled, which fainted, sweat, and bled; and this must have a little strength to go through the remaining sorrow. He had not strength enough to bear his cross, but he must have enough to live so long upon it as he did, to give several orders from it, to cry out, "It is finished," with a full voice, and immediately to die at once. How careful was this good angel, that he might, in a station which made him lower than themselves, be able to go through his undertaking?

5. At his resurrection he was "seen" and attended "of angels." They were ready to serve him at all times; but for important reasons obliged to leave him at his death. He tells Peter, that he could pray to the Father, "who would presently give him more than twelve legions of angels." And if the Father had sent them, they would gladly have come; and what work must one of them make in a cabal of Sadducees, who believe neither angel nor Spirit! But then, saith he, "how should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" So that it was necessary for the suffering of death, that he should be stripped of his guards. But when he came to rise again, all these restraints are over. The angel of the Lord, as one no longer held in, goes early in the morning, and by an earthquake rolls away the stone from the door of the sepulchre; his countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow, Matt. xxviii. 2, 3.

And see what different distributions he made of his influences. "For fear of him did the keepers shake, and become as dead men;" and yet you may be sure these were picked out as the stoutest of the faction.

But to a couple of poor disconsolate women he saith, "fear not, for I know ye seek Jesus who was crucified: he is not here, he is risen as he said. Come see the place where the Lord lay; and go quickly and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead, and goes before you into Galilee: lo, I have told you." "I your friend, and his servant; he has left me behind, that you might have no disappointment." Though the keepers lay sprawling, and none of the men of might could find their hands, yet these women "departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy." There was an awe upon their spirits, but it gave them a delicious confusion, and they ran to bring the disciples word. Afterwards some of the disciples come, and see nothing of him and therefore go their way. Mary who had brought them to the sepulchre, continues weeping there, and will not leave it. Upon this, "she sees two angels in white, sitting one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain." So ready were these happy creatures to show him their regard, that they will go and live a while in the place where he had been dead. Angels in a grave! the sons of immortal life in the chambers of death! that they should sit where none in their nature shall ever lie, is very unaccountable. But you may say of their behaviour over our Lord's grave, as it is said of his over that of Lazarus, "behold how they loved him!"

6. He was "seen of angels," i. e. admired and attended by them, at his ascension. There were forty days, which, as they fell between his manifestation in the flesh, and his being received up into glory, so they partook of both, i. e. he was neither always with his disciples, nor had he totally left them. There was in his conversation a mixture of the inhabitant and the stranger: such an intermediate life was only to hold the length of forty days. And this being the last that his disciples should see of him here below, he was determined to conclude his work upon earth, with a dignity suitable to the errand that brought him hither.

The story is told by Luke, that "he led them out as far as to Bethany, and lifted up his hands and blessed them; and while he blessed them he was parted from them." In another book it is said, "When he spake these things, whilst they beheld, he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight," Acts i. 9. But though they might not see all the solemnity with which he went up, as not being able to bear it, yet it is described, Psal. lxviii. that "the chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels; the Lord is among them." Who is this Lord, but the great Mediator? When was he among them, but at the time that he ascended up on high, and led captivity captive? This title, the chariots of God, intimates their office. He is said in another place to ride on the wings of the wind, and to make the clouds his chariot, i. e. (to bring it as near to our own conceptions as can be,) they attend him where he moves. They go up with him, shouting, singing, praising, filling the air in their passage with melody, and the heaven in their entry with triumph. And the whole of that pompous glory concluded in this service of the angels, that two of them "stood by the apostles in white apparel, which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven," Acts i. 11.

7. He is "seen of the angels" in heaven. John saw in the midst of the throne, and of the four creatures, and the four and twenty elders, "a Lamb as it had been slain." It is observed, that "when he brings the first-begotten into the world, he saith, Let all the angels of God worship him." This bringing him into the world may be understood of his incarnation; and if they were to worship him then, we may conclude what a profound regard they would give him when he was made perfect from his sufferings. But some are of opinion, that the word "again" should not be the tie between one verse and another, but connected to what is here said. That it ought

not to be as we read it, "Again, when he brings the first-begotten;" but, "When he brings the first-begotten again into the world," i. e. at his resurrection and ascension. When he returns to the glory, that he had with the Father before the world was, then are orders issued out to the angels to worship him. But I promise myself more room to consider this passage, when I come to argue from the behaviour of the angels to our Redeemer, as an evidence of his Deity; that such a carriage as they are directed to, can be given to no other than the Supreme Being, one that is "over all, God blessed for ever."

2d, The esteem the angels had for our blessed Lord, appears from their care to promote the design that he came about. Though he was not in their nature, nor had they any need of his purchase, yet his good will towards men is what they follow with their hearty wishes. We read of the care they have to spread the gospel, their particular tenderness for ministers, their joy at the conversion of a sinner, their diligence about the heirs of salvation, their readiness to take the charge of a dying believer, and the welcome they give him into the place of their own habitation.

1. Christ is seen and admired of the angels, in his design as well as his person, because it is their care to spread the gospel; not to preach it, for that would rather confound sinners than awaken them. "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us;" yet the Scripture has taken notice of their zeal about this great affair. Hence we read of an angel flying through the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him, for the hour of his judgment is come; and worship him that made heaven and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters," Rev. xiv. 6, 7. We cannot think that God will lay aside men of like passions with ourselves, and make those spirits his ministers who are all of them "flames of fire." But

thus much may be argued from it, that they do some way or other promote the knowledge of Christ among men and so lead them into the methods of life eternal. They were the first preachers that we read of in the New Testament, to Zacharias, the Virgin Mary, and the shepherds. In their discourses to each of these, they lay out the nature, the office, and the design of our Redeemer; that he should be called the Son of the Highest, and the Lord his God shall give him the kingdom of his father David; and he shall rule over the house of Jacob; and of that kingdom there shall be no end, Luke i. 32, 33. To the shepherds they not only proclaim his birth, and his title, "a Saviour who is Christ the Lord," but the great result of all this dispensation, that it would be "glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, and good will towards men."

Nay, I may take their ministry from a more early date. Daniel wept in prayer for his people, his holy city, and the sanctuary of the Lord that was desolate. An angel comes down, after he had chastened himself with fasting and supplication; and what was it to tell him? a great deal more than the news of political mercies; that the captivity of Jerusalem was accomplished. Besides that, he leads his thoughts to the main hope of Israel, that Messiah the Prince was to come; to come both as a Prince and a sacrifice; that he would be cut off, to finish transgression, to make an end of sin, to bring in an everlasting righteousness, to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy, Dan. ix. 24. These are the chief doctrines of our gospel, and they are revealed to that holy Prophet by the angel.

Do but observe what a nobler employment these happy creatures had upon the return of the people from Babylon, than when they conducted the children of Israel out of Egypt. God sent his angel before them to drive out the Amorite; but there is no comparison between their providing for the Jews a plentiful country, and their opening out in a better light what had been the hope of their fathers. They

brought these glad tidings of great joy at several periods. We only say what they sung. They and we are in the same story; and what an aggravation will this be of our neglect, if we despise what they bring!

It is mentioned as a perpetual brand upon the children of Israel, that they loathed the manna which was "angels' food," i. e. the angels conveyed it to them; and again, that though they "received the law by the disposition of angels, they did not keep it;" and that "the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a recompense of reward," Heb. ii. 2. But as their care about us is more engaged, so our unbelief is more enhanced. When the apostle had told us of the angels flying through the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel, he goes on to show us their zeal for the reformation of Christianity from those corruptions under which it has suffered; and his prophecy is to be understood of a particular period that we are waiting for. "Then followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication," Rev. xiv. 8.

How comes this to be the concern of angels? why are they in heaven so much affected with our sufferings upon earth? It is certain, their religion is always clean and always easy. Babylon shall never hurt them: but it is a Redeemer's cause; and that warms them into a zeal for those happy days when the mother of abominations is to perish with all her arts. This they proclaim, not only as a thing that will be, but they give fair warning, "If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone, in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb," Rev. xiv. 9, 10.

What a testimony is here given to our separation from those corruptions that have stolen into the wor-

ship of God! It is no matter to me by what convocations or councils it is censured, if we have the opinion of the angels, "the general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven." Value the gospel as it is Christian, and admire your religion as it is reformed. An angel preaches the one and encourages the other; and then comes in this remark upon the whole, "Here is the patience of the saints; here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." Our duty is an act of patience. A man that will be faithful will be opposed; and the thing we are obliged to keep is not only the commandments of God, what is contained in natural religion, but that faith of Jesus, which we can only have by revelation.

2. We may further see the care of the holy angels about the work of a Redeemer, from their tenderness for the ministers of the gospel. I am not now making way for any of those whimsical stories with which the papists have deceived their readers. I know no more of angels than the Scripture has told me; their ministry is a part of the revelation I meet with there. It is plain, though they do not preach the gospel, they have a special charge about those that do. We have examples of this, both in the Old and New Testament, which show the wisdom of our Redeemer, that the persons who are like to meet with hardships from the inhabitants of this world, shall have better usage from those that belong to another.

I will go over a few passages that we find in the Acts of the Apostles. In the xii. chapter, you read that Peter was designed for the same violent death that James the brother of John had already suffered; and the utmost care is taken that he shall not escape. He is fast asleep between two soldiers, bound with two heavy chains. The church can do no more than pray for him; and that is doing enough, for the work fell into able hands. The angel of the Lord comes into the prison, raises him up, calls him out; the chains fell from his hands, and this in so still a manner, that Peter thought he saw a vision; the iron

gate that led to the city opened of its own accord, and he is left at liberty to visit a company of good people who were then at prayer for him. When he was come to himself he said, "Now I know of a surety, that the Lord has sent his angel, and has delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews," Acts xii. 11. And, as if the angel thought his work but half done in delivering the apostle, unless he had also killed a tyrant, we are told at the end of that chapter, that when Herod sat basking himself in the flatteries of a shouting crowd, "the angel of the Lord smote him, and he was eaten up of worms, and gave up the ghost." By this means the word of God grew and multiplied.

Such another instance we have of their care about the apostle Paul. He and his company were in a storm fourteen days and nights; they saw neither sun, moon, nor stars, and perhaps no brethren ashore were sensible of their danger, and therefore it is likely there was no extraordinary prayer for them, as there had been in the case of Peter. But if Christians knew not their danger, angels did; "for," saith Paul, "there stood by me this night the angel of the Lord, whose I am, and whom I serve, and said, Fear not, for thou must be brought before Cæsar, and lo, God has given thee all them that sail with thee." We have ground to imagine, that the heavenly guards do us many an invisible kindness, without making any noise about it. The escapes that faithful ministers have had in times of persecution are so remarkable, that it is no straining the case, to suppose those favours conveyed by the standing officers of a Redeemer's providence.

3. Their love to the great work that our Lord came about, appears in the joy there is among them at the conversion of a sinner. Our Saviour gives us this under the similitude of two parables; the man that found his lost sheep, and the woman her piece of money; they are each of them represented as calling their friends and neighbours together to come and re-

joice with them. These friends and neighbours neither suffered by the affliction, nor gained by the mercy. They were unconcerned, any further than sympathy and good nature made them look upon it as their own case at second hand. The angels are very properly signified by those names; they neither lose nor get by the ruin or salvation of men. If there was no such thing as a redemption for our nature, there would still be the same happiness for theirs; but they are called in to rejoice with a Redeemer. He who has sought and saved that which was lost is the person whom they love, and therefore they are glad with him. This is the very application that our Lord himself makes of the parable. "I say unto you, there is joy among the angels of heaven over one sinner that repenteth."

From hence you may conclude, either their presence in our assemblies, or the correspondence that is kept open between our world and theirs. There is no such thing as an awakened soul, a sinner turned from the error of his way, but they know it, either by observation or by tidings; and this sets them a rejoicing. Why? From the good will they have to a Redeemer. They saw him in the travail of his soul; they observed him in the garden, the weight and torture of that agony; they beheld him bleeding, groaning, and dying upon the cross; and it must needs be their pleasure to find that all this was not in vain; that as he gave himself for sinners, so by his grace sinners give themselves to him. They rejoice in this as the effect of a dear bargain, as a mighty purchase, and a glorious victory. There is more than love to a soul, that fills the joy; it is part of their praises to him who came to save us in the name of the Lord, and therefore they sing "hosanna in the highest."

And if they are so delighted in the repentance of one sinner, what will they be when the word of the Lord has a free course and is glorified? With what pleasure do they look on when people flock to the Lord as doves to their windows, every one fluttering and pressing for light! What a good day was that to the

angels in heaven, when one sermon fetched in three thousand souls! when the people were pricked in their hearts, the angels felt the conviction; not in pain and affright as they did, but they saw what it would end in; and we may suppose from the pleasure that was diffused among them then, what a share they will have in joying and beholding our order and the steadfastness of our faith in Christ. When the days come that the knowledge of the Lord shall not drop as the rain and distil as the dew, but cover the earth as the waters do the sea, it will make our earth look like their heaven, and their heaven still brighter and sweeter. As the light of the moon shall be like the light of the sun, so the light of the sun shall be seven fold, as the light of seven days, Isa. xxx. 26. What an encouragement should this be to ministers, and indeed to all of you, whom the angels have so much obliged? Fulfil ye their joy, promote their happiness, give them occasion to bring more praises into heaven.

4. You see the concern they have for the work of Christ, by their care about the heirs of salvation. Our Lord has told us, that they are "all ministering spirits;" first, to him; to wait upon his person, to admire and contemplate his glory. But that is not all; for, secondly, they are "sent forth to minister to them who shall be the heirs of salvation," Heb. i. 14. Where you observe,

First, That their whole number is included in this order, they are all ministering spirits. Gabriel himself, who stands in the presence of God, goes down to Daniel in a dungeon, to Zacharias in the temple, to the Virgin Mary in her solitude.

Secondly, Though they keep their own nature, yet that is employed for our good. When our Saviour came down, he took upon him a new nature. "The Word was made flesh," that he might dwell among us; but these still continue pure spirits, and do their service without any change of constitution.

Thirdly, For this they are obliged to leave the realms of happiness and light. They are sent forth; not but that it is heaven wherever they go. They

do not depart from the joy and glory that are bestowed upon their nature. However, the commission reaches to our world; there they must come, and there do their service.

Fourthly, It is to the whole body of the faithful; not ministers only, or Christians of a higher standing, but every one that has obtained mercy of the Lord is their charge. They had as much concern for Lazarus who died at a gate, as for David who breathed his last in a palace.

Fifthly, This is with regard to the purchase that Christ has made. For the people to whom they do these offices, are considered as heirs of salvation, the children of a king, the pensioners of a conqueror.

Sixthly, Though believers are not actually in heaven, yet the thoughts of what they shall be, have an influence upon the angels; they minister to those who shall be the heirs of salvation, i. e. shall be possessed of it, and come to it as their great and last inheritance. What an esteem do they show for Christ, when they are not ashamed of any whom he owns? Every drop of his blood is precious, every purchase of his grace is dear. Christians are beneath them in nature, but that is no matter, since they are united in the head. In pursuance of these orders, "the angel of the Lord encamps round about them that fear him, and delivers them," Psal. xxxiv. 7. Having received a charge concerning us, in their hands they will bear us up, "lest at any time we dash our foot against a stone."

5. Their attendance in our assemblies to see what is done there, is another argument of their concern in the design that our Redeemer came about. It is no force upon the imagination to suppose that they are looking on; we are charged to keep up an external decency "because of the angels." Now why should they who are blessed with a dwelling in God's house, and praise him there, come down to services so much beneath their own? What is there in our duties worth their beholding? Is it not an abusing of themselves to be among those who dwell in houses of clay, and

whose devotions are as earthy and mouldering as their persons? and yet hither they come. They hear the doctrines of the pulpit, and see the behaviour of a congregation. Though they cannot look into our hearts, yet there is enough in our carriage that betrays what sort of principles are at work within. Our outward reverence to that name which is above every name, our delight in the law of the Lord, our receiving the love of the truth, are things within their observation. When Jacob went on his way, "the angels of God met him;" for which reason he called the name of the place *Mahanaim*, because that was "God's host." And before that, in his dream, he saw a ladder reaching from earth to heaven, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon it; which makes him cry out, "How dreadful is this place! this is the house of God, this is the gate of heaven!"

We can make no such conclusions as these about any places, but we come to promote the work which angels love. From our gospel they learn the mysteries of the kingdom. "Unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places is made known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God," Eph. iii. 10. Not that we can tell them these things better than they know them; but nevertheless they are here as learners. They admire every place and company where the doctrines of the gospel are opened. The history of our religion comprehends the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow, and these the angels desire to look into (παρακυψαι.) They are in a bending, searching, prying posture.

Though they sung at the making of the earth, and its separation from the infolding waters, yet here is a new song put into their mouths; what is more entertaining, as it shows a greater act of wisdom, and brings in a larger return of glory. And is it not good to insist upon what they admire? Suppose they were to choose our subjects, what would they have us preach upon? Are they against *mysteries*, and things that belong to revealed religion? No; what they desire to know, is "the manifold wisdom of God;

"the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom that God ordained before the world to our glory," 1 Cor. ii. 7. There is nothing more pleasing to them than when ministers "make all men see, what is the fellowship of the mystery, that from the beginning of the world has been hid in God," Eph. iii. 9.

6. Their esteem of Christ and the work he came about, is seen by their readiness to take care of departing souls. There is something of this which a Redeemer does in his own person; "I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am ye may be also." The martyr Stephen was conscious of this, when he cried out, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." But yet the Scripture has also told us, that the angels do a kind and friendly part upon these occasions. They carried Lazarus's soul "into Abraham's bosom." It is happy indeed, that when the world below is shifting from us, when it either can or will do us no more service, then do these new acquaintances step in. They will at last have the charge of collecting our dust, and building up those bodies that have been so long pulled in pieces. Nay, they are to sort the dead, and take away the wicked from among the just. Though this will be the effect of the voice of the Son of man, yet when he comes about this, it is "with his mighty angels." "Michael the archangel disputed with the devil about the body of Moses," Jude 9. And as they take care that one part of a believer shall rest in hope, so they go with a readiness to show the other the path of life.

7. We see their esteem of Christ and the work that he came about, by the welcome they give his people into the place of their own habitation. If they minister to those who shall be the heirs of salvation, before they take possession of their inheritance, what will they do when these happy persons have thrown off imperfection and mortality! It is said, at the resurrection we shall be "like the angels," or ἰσαγγελοι, *equal* to them. That is, we shall die no more, nor live in that gross and carnal way that we do at present;

we must be then as they have been always. Thus you see how he who was "manifest in the flesh," and "justified in the Spirit," is "seen of angels;" what a regard they have for his person, and with what a zeal they promote his design. And in these two particulars I have considered the first head, which was to open the expression, and show you what is contained in it.

II. The next general head is this, that he who was thus "seen of angels" is no other than *the Most High God;* and that we cannot have lower notions of him without charging the guilt of idolatry upon them. It is a pity that any who profess Christianity are uneasy to be told so, or that those opinions should grow into fashion, that make the least of a Saviour; that for this name of Christ, ministers are to bear reproach, and to suffer shame. But whatever satisfaction some can give themselves in a faith that rests upon a creature, I hope there are many among us who will receive it as the glad tidings of salvation, when we say unto Zion, "Thy *God* reigneth." This is, and I trust ever shall be, the language of our gospel, whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear. "O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain. O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say to the cities of Judah, behold your *God*," Isa. xl. 9.

I have already argued it at large from the two former branches of the mystery of godliness; and though it is a wonder, it is nevertheless to me a truth, that is dearer than all others; that he who was manifest in the flesh, he who is justified in the Spirit, is a *God;* not merely by virtue of the office that he sustained, but in the highest and most proper sense of the word; and as we rejoice in his salvation, so in the name of our God we will set up our banners.

I shall now pursue the argument from what is further said of him, that he was "seen of angels." Their homage is a great deal too much for any one but him that made them; as you will find from the worship they pay him, the meditation they devote to

him, their obedience to his commands, their attendance upon his person and his people. What they do each of these ways would be no better than idolatry, if it was given to a created nature.

1. The Scripture has expressly told us, that they worship him. The place I refer to is Heb. i. 6. "When he brings the first-begotten into the world, he saith, and let all the angels of God worship him." That the person here spoken of as designed for this honour was our blessed Lord, is above all dispute, both from his being called "the first-begotten," and the reference there is to some particular period, in which he is said to be brought into the world. Whether that is his incarnation or his ascension, I shall not now inquire. It is plain enough that this comes in among his glories, that all the angels of God shall worship him.

I know that the opinion which sets bounds to the perfection of Christ, will do the same to the worship of angels, and tell us this is not adoration. But how to talk of what angels do, in any other than the words of Scripture, I know not. The apostle gives us these words as a quotation out of the Old Testament, and they can signify no less in one place than they do in another. The passage you have Psal. xcvii. 7. "Worship him, all ye gods." What the Psalmist calls "gods," the apostle calls the "angels of God;" but as the phrase of *worship* is what they both use, we must by no means make the sense of it so different, that in the one it is devotion, in the other civility. For the apostle to speak of one person, and the psalmist of another, would make the quotation impertinent. How can he prove that Christ is better than the angels, by a sentence out of the Old Testament, when it is not to be understood of *Him?* How wide had this been from all the rules of argument, and how incapable of giving any conviction? If the Psalmist does not speak of a Redeemer, it could not be true that such a thing is said of him, "Worship him all ye gods:" and therefore we both

may and must fetch the sense from that Psalm, out of which the apostle fetches the words.

And who is it, whom those gods, or those angels are to worship? See of whom he speaks, try whether you can conceive of his Deity with any of those diminutions that are so much applauded? It is "He who reigns, for which the earth must be glad, and the multitude of isles rejoice: clouds are about him, righteousness and judgment are the habitations of his throne; a fire goes before his face, and burns up his enemies round about: his lightnings enlightened the world, the earth saw and trembled; the hills melted like wax at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth; the heavens declare his righteousness, and all the people see his glory. Confounded be all those that serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols: worship Him all ye gods."—*Him* whose glory he had thus described.

This Psalm must have a great deal of garbling, before the expressions can be made low enough for a creature. If David does not speak of the Most High in this place, he does it no where. To say, that all these characters may be given to one who has not the Supreme Nature, is to say that God has given his glory to another; for no words can be more descriptive of his majesty, than what are used on this occasion. And to say, that though David speaks of the Most High God, yet the apostle transfers the characters to one who is no more than the first of creatures, is drawing him under a twofold guilt; 1. That he brings that into his argument which has no place there: he reasons upon a falsehood; he affirms, that God has said that of Christ which he never said; and this in an epistle to the Hebrews, who of all people were the most afraid of running into idolatry. 2. There is somewhat worse than this, that he is actually guilty of a robbery, in affirming that of a creature, which is peculiar to the Most High God. This is what the Supreme Nature

never did alienate from itself; and therefore He, whom the angels are appointed to worship, as the Psalmist tells us, is high above all the earth, and exalted far above all gods.

2. There is another thing in our Saviour's being "seen of angels," that is an argument of his Divinity; and this may be deduced from their meditations of him. They throw in their best thoughts upon the subject of our redemption: "These things the angels desire to look into." They desire it with the greatest application and fervour; looking into them, signifies their attention and perseverance in the study; and what are these things? The apostle tells us, they are such as the prophets in former ages did minister to us, and such as are now reported by them that have preached the gospel; and in the confirmation of which the Holy Ghost is sent down from heaven. He had before given us the particulars under those two heads, that comprehend all the articles of our religion, the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. This is what the Spirit of Christ in the prophets did testify before-hand. This is the salvation of which they inquired earnestly; and this is the grace that is come unto us.

Now, merely to behold these sufferings, and to gaze at the glory that came after them, cannot be all that the angels do. Our Lord's enemies had a conviction of both these: they saw him die, and were astonished at the evidence that was given of his resurrection. None of those things were done in a corner. But the bending down of the angels to this subject, as the Greek word signifies, must be to a great deal more than matters of fact. They looked at his sufferings and the following glory, as casting an influence upon each other; that he suffered in such a way, as to procure, to deserve, and demand all the happiness for himself and his people, that is comprehended in the great name of *glory*. They saw that the consequence of his death was no less than the highest honour for himself, and a full portion for all believers, in every kindred, and tongue, and people, and

nation. John beheld, and heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying, with a loud voice, worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing, Rev. v. 11, 12.

Now, is it possible that a creature should be equal to such a claim? How could the punishing of one that is innocent bring a pardon to those that are guilty? Why must his tasting death be for every man? How can we reconcile it to our notions of God's justice, which demands satisfaction for sin? first, that this should be exacted on one that did not sin; and secondly, that it should be discharged from those that did nothing but sin? If an innocent person should *choose* to die, yet what has this to do with those who *deserve* to die? The debt is never the less, except he that makes the satisfaction does also receive it.

And therefore, I do not at all wonder, that when people go off from the Deity of Christ, they make wretched work in explaining the story of his death, and do what they can to sink the imputation of his righteousness. They will not allow that he died for his people as their ransom and sacrifice; and indeed I do not see how they can: for if he is a creature, let him be never so glorious, it would be an injury to lay on him the iniquity of us all. If it was no more than the case of an angel, how great must the hardship be for one of them to come down into our nature, to live so poor and low as Christ did, and at last to die under a curse? Might not such a one plead, "Lord, why am I sent upon this errand? if thou wilt save any of that wicked race, let it not be at my expense. It was not my law that they broke; and therefore, if they must be the objects of thy love, do not bring it about by making me the mark of thine anger."

The higher any creature is above the angels, the better would his argument have been against the fatigues and charges of this design. But it was the

lawgiver himself who made all the creation, and has a revenue of glory from it; it was he who came under the law, "that we might receive the adoption of sons," Gal. iv. 4. He had no necessity upon him from the command of a superior, but speaks like one at liberty, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." He then submitted to take upon him a nature, that was to be supported, to be directed and controlled. When he came into the world, he said "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, but a body hast thou prepared me." He "made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself." But,

Antecedent to his own resolution, there was no government over him; and therefore the apostle joins these two together, which cannot be understood of the same nature, but shows that the person of whom he speaks is to be considered with this variety, that he came of the Jews, "as concerning the flesh," but "he is over all, God blessed for ever," Rom. ix. 5. This is what the angels desire to look into, as the good people of old were taught to believe by a figure; when the cherubims were drawn with their eyes towards one another, and towards the mercy-seat. This was to denote the wonder they felt at the mystery of our redemption, and that what they looked at was the work of a God. The mercy-seat was the throne of the Most High We often read, that he "dwells between the cherubims." Their eyes were fixed on him, as carrying on a design of love, "the pleasure of the Lord," that should prosper in his hand. We can hardly conceive, that they should be so taken up in their eternity with the actions of a *creature*, or that they would think the humbling of one above them, so as to bring him a little below them, was a full amends to the justice of God, the vindication of his holiness, or the magnifying of his law.

There is more dishonour done to God by the sin of man, than the death of all the angels in heaven could be able to repair; and the reason is, because the offence is offered to an infinite nature, and the recom-

pense cannot be made by a finite one. Now, though Christ Jesus is above them, yet if he is a creature, he is still as far from infinite as they are. And therefore, when God speaks of putting him to death, he calls it the awaking of his sword against the man that was his "fellow," Zech. xiii. 7. It was not enough that this person should be innocent; an angel had that character in him, and could have died the just for the unjust; but he must be *equal* to the party whom he came to satisfy, and then those sufferings had in them merit enough to claim all the glory that followed.

3. Their obedience to his commands is another argument of their regard to his Divinity; that as a *God* he is "seen of angels." Thus does the apostle speak of him and of them; "Of the angels he saith, who makes his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire." To whom are they ministers, but to him that made them? He that gave them their spirituality, as so many flames of fire; is the only object of their veneration and duty. Well, the next words let us see which way their obedience is paid. "To the Son he saith, thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom." Can any thing greater than this be said of the Divine Majesty?

Both these passages are taken out of the book of Psalms. That concerning the angels is in the civ., where we read of God's eternal greatness; and it is mentioned as his noblest production of life, that he "makes his angels spirits, and his ministers a flaming fire." Had there been, as some will have us believe, two creatures above them, the Son and the Holy Ghost, why did not the psalmist begin with these, as a more exalted instance of what was done in the creation? It is apparent the scheme was not thought of in his day, but is reserved for our later times.

The other passage is taken out of Psalm xlv., and the words must mean the same in one place that they do in the other. "To the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." The translation that

some have insinuated, "God is thy throne for ever," carries in it such an uncertain sound, that I cannot determine these words are the right sense, till I find they bear any sense at all. Angels have *thrones*, and they are called *gods;* and as their thrones are never to be destroyed, in that sense they are "for ever and ever." But is there not something in the sentence too great for them? We must take care that in bringing down the words by such an interpretation, we do not rob the apostle of his design; for he is showing us, that something is said to the Son, which never was said of the angels. Nay, he goes on, "A sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom." You may bring these words low enough to understand them of David or Solomon; but can we imagine that the Holy Spirit means no more?

The addition, "God, even thy God has anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows," only proves that our Saviour is to be considered in a lower created nature, which none denies. In that sense, he saith, "I go to my Father, and your Father; to my God, and your God." Where he puts his relation to the Most High as his God and Father, upon the same grounds with that which his people have. But the apostle here tells us, that he is God in such a sense as to answer our highest notions of a Deity. "Thou, Lord, hast in the beginning laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thine hands. They shall perish, but thou remainest, and they shall all wax old, as does a garment, and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed; but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail," Heb. i. 10—12. These are things that were never mentioned of any but the Most High God; that he is "the Creator of the ends of the earth, the high and lofty One that inhabits eternity;" that "the heavens are the Lord's," and he is "without any variableness or shadow of turning." And yet here they are plainly affirmed of Christ, and brought in as the reason, why the angels should worship him, and be ministering spirits to him. They can argue

as much for their duty to the Son, as we can for ours to the Father. "He has made us, and not we ourselves; we are the work of his hands."

To this the Scripture has given a happy testimony from a text that was never pretended to be dropped in copies, and cannot easily be mangled with criticism, Col. i. 14—18, he speaks of the kingdom of "God's dear Son, in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins." When we talk of his blood, we must consider him as a man like ourselves, capable of dying as we are. But from this he rises into other characters, that show we are to regard him as an omnipotent Being. "By him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible; whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him and for him; and he is before all things, and by him all things consist; and he is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead." I do not remember a text in all the Bible where the work of creation is laid down in more lofty particulars. Here you see the foundation of that duty which the angels ever pay him. The things said to be done by him are never mentioned as the work of a creature. When the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, it was with this question: "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?" and the reverence it produced from that good man was, "I know that *thou* canst do every thing." But the particulars mentioned by the apostle are greater than those with which God fills his argument to Job. We read of "things in heaven and earth, visible and invisible; thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers." These, I suppose, must be understood of those exalted beings that are placed in such dignities. By "thrones," we may conceive of the angels that sit upon them; by "dominions and principalities," the inhabitants above who have these honours belonging to them. Well, all things both above and below were created "by him, and for him."

There is an answer to this argument, that things were created by Jesus Christ as an *instrument;* that is a wooden word indeed, and people must be very ready to part with the text, and their senses too, before they can let the evidence of so plain a Scripture be turned off in that manner; it is talking by no rules of language. Will any one call the lord mayor of London the king's instrument, because by him he governs the city? Is not this darkening counsel by words without knowledge? But the weight of the argument is still heavier upon them, when it is said, that all things were not only created "by him," but "for him." Now, we know that the Lord has "made all things for *himself.*" We are not able to conceive of the Most High in greater apprehensions than those, that he is the God "for whom are all things, and by whom are all things;" that "of him, and through him, and to him, are all things," Heb. ii. 10. Rom. xi. 36. It would be blasphemy to say this of any other besides himself. It is the language of their praises in heaven. "The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat upon the throne, and worship him that lives for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne." These are descriptions of the utmost reverence they can pay; and what they say with all this solemnity is, "thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." Where is the difference between those professions and adorations, and what is here expressly said of Christ Jesus, that "all things were created by him and for him?" How come the words on earth to be understood of a creature, when they in heaven give them to none but the Creator? How comes one text to signify a Supreme Agent, and another, without any diminution of language, to be no more than a lofty account of an instrument? Such blundering work will people make of it, when their reason is too great to receive a mystery, and too little to explain it. No wonder that such an usage of revelation prepares the world to despise it all. For

when many follow these pernicious ways, the way of truth is evil spoken of.

4. The attendance the angels give to the person and people of a Redeemer, furnishes out another argument for his Divinity. They are all ministering spirits sent forth to minister to them who shall be the heirs of salvation," Heb. i. 14. This is for his sake. Though in the same chapter they are called ministering spirits both to him and to us, we cannot possibly give the words the same interpretation. All their offices of care and goodness are not only an act of friendship to believers, but of obedience to our Lord. Thus Daniel tells the king, "My God hath sent his angel and has shut the lions' mouths," and Gabriel himself owns, "The commandment came forth, and I am come to show thee." We read of his giving the angels a charge over us. Our Saviour in his humiliation said, he could "pray the Father, who would presently give him more than twelve legions of angels." And when they minister to the heirs of salvation, they are *sent* to do it; which supposes that their tenderness about us is all along carried on with a regard to him that is over them.

Now, who is this person, and how do they behave towards him? We find, Isa. vi. 1, that the prophet "saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple." His train's filling the temple must refer to the work of salvation that he came about. Whether it is to be understood of his human nature, which is called "the temple of his body," or the house of God at Jerusalem, "the city of the great King," I shall not now inquire. The words are true in both senses; for when the desire of all nations came, he filled the house with glory, Hag. ii. 7. His throne that was "high and lifted up," is to be understood of something greater than what he did upon earth. "Above this throne stood the seraphims; each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly."

Was not the solemnity of this attendance, hiding

their faces as unable to look, their feet as unworthy to stand, and stretching their wings as ready to go, too much for a creature? Could they have done any more to him that made them? It is evident, they do not talk of him as one between themselves and the throne of God, as the Father's deputy and vicegerent, but cry *of* him in a way that some people would not have us cry *to* him. "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory." This is the repeated ascription in heaven, "Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." And though there is a great deal of pains taken to show us, that the government over the earth may be committed to one that is not God by nature, yet this expression, "The whole earth is full of his glory," carries in it those praises that are ascribed to the Most High. "O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!" and again, "The earth is full of thy riches." "The posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke." This, you will say, might be the work of a creature; an angel was able to do so much; but however, it is elsewhere mentioned as an instance of Omnipotence. "They said, Lord, thou art God, who hast made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is; grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, by stretching forth thy hand to heal, that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus," Acts iv. 24. 29, 30. No doubt they here appeal to the Father, and it is observed as a thing not unworthy of *him*, that "when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together." That smoke, which came into Solomon's temple, is called "the glory of the Lord." With regard to which it is said, that he would "dwell in the thick darkness;" so that such expressions as these, "the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that spake, and the house was filled with smoke," are brought in as the work of Omnipotence in other places of Scripture, whatever they may be allowed to signify here.

We can easily imagine how the admirers of the new scheme would understand what happened; but let us inquire what Isaiah says of it, who lived a long while before our age of liberty and politeness. And we find, in the

First place, That he dares not use the name of a Redeemer, and the mystery of salvation, with the freedom that is now contended for, but rather cries out, "Wo is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips." Very different from the language of those who speak proud things, and whose lips are their own. It is a sign he either saw too much, or they see too little; which shows us, by the way, that the more we know of Christ Jesus, the greater reverence shall we use in speaking of him. If ever the light of the glorious Gospel breaks out among us, the particular confession of that day will be the uncleanness of our lips. However,

Secondly, He gives you the ground of this lamentation. "Mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." If the word *King* may signify an office, yet the other title, *the Lord of hosts*, is used so often, that we should think it a sacred name. Well, one of the seraphims flew to him, and laid a live coal upon his mouth, saying, "Thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin is purged." This must be by a commission from Him, with whom alone is forgiveness. After this, he heard the word of the Lord, saying, "Whom shall I send? and who will go for us?" that Lord who sat upon the throne, and is called by the angels, "the Lord of hosts." And "*he* said, go and tell this people, hear ye indeed, and perceive not," &c.

Now can any text in the Bible express more duty and attendance than the angels here are said to give? and yet that it may be secure from all plunder of modern interpretations, the Evangelist has quoted these very words, with this remark upon them, "These things said Esaias, when he saw *his* glory and spake of *him*," John xii. 40, 41, that is of Christ Jesus. For the story is this, that "though *he* had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not

on him, that the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, Who has believed our report? And again, they could not believe, because Esaias had said, He has blinded their eyes, &c. These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory," (i. e. in the year that king Uzziah died,) "and spake of *him;*" the very same God, whom, being manifest in the flesh, and dwelling among us, the world knew not, though he was in the world, and the world was made by him.

Thus you see this was a doctrine long enough before creeds were ever thought of; and if we would build upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, it must be by a good confession of what they have told us. I may plead, as the apostle does in a lower case, "Say I these things as a man, or saith not the law the same also?" As the ministry we have received is concerning Him who is the true God, and eternal life, so having obtained mercy we faint not under all reproach and hardship, but renounce the hidden things of dishonesty, the skulking artifice of those who have no pleasure in the truth, who have designs that they dare not own. We walk not in craftiness, nor handle the word of the Lord deceitfully, but by a manifestation of the truth, and *that* the greatest truth of our religion, commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God; and if this gospel is hid, it is hid to them that are lost, 2 Cor. iv. 2, 3.

III. The next general head is to consider it as a *mystery*, that our *God* should be "seen of angels;" and though this is objected against the doctrine, and makes people look on it as foolishness, yet that need be no surprise; so it ever was, and so it ever will be, as long as "the carnal mind is enmity against God." "We speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought; but we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory," 1 Cor. ii. 6, 7. You see of what nature our doctrine is, and how clashing it must be with the

pride of human reason; and therefore when persons ridicule a Christian's believing what he does not understand, and represent all that faith as irrational and enthusiastic, one would think they never read what the apostle saith, that "The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

How poorly must my text look in the Bible, which is here introduced with a heavenly pomp, "Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness," if by "mystery" we are to understand something that is not wonderful, and by a "great mystery" what is no more than a rational system! and though it is said to be mysterious "without controversy," yet it shall be a controversy, whether it is any mystery at all? The glorious doctrines that are wrapt up in this account are denied, because they are what the Scripture tells us they should be, the great mysteries of godliness. Alas! whither are we running! Do you think God would deliver himself with all this preparation, and talk of great mysteries, when he designed to tell us no more than what we might have had without any revelation?

That Christ was manifest in the flesh, is true, for he was made of a woman; but take off his Deity from the report, and where is the mystery of it? It was none to the Jews; when he tells them, "Ye know not whence I am," they were ready to answer him in the negative. His father, and mother, and brethren we know, and how saith he then, I came down from above? People may wrangle as long as they will, but if our religion is both described and recommended to us as a *great mystery*, the mysteriousness of any one doctrine in it can be no objection, because it agrees to what is said of the whole. Now this part of the story, that he was "seen of angels" is wonderful, in that they admired a Saviour whom they did not need, and regarded him in a nature below their own.

1. This was a Saviour of whom they had no need,

for they never sinned. I use these words in a comparative sense, i. e. they had not such occasion for a Redeemer as we have; for it is supposed, and that with a great deal of evidence, that they are now confirmed by him, and fixed in a happiness in which there will be no shadow of turning. Hence they are called by one of our names, "the elect angels," as chosen of God, not to be redeemed, but only to be assured of what they have already.

Now is it not a wonder, that they who never knew either guilt or misery, any otherwise than by looking on, should so admire a design that only comprehends them at the second hand? Religion and the great interest of Christianity is recommended to *us*, by such arguments as these, "This is not a vain thing, because it is your life." "Work out your own salvation." But none of these reasons can have an influence upon the spirits about the throne; they being made with a purity, always kept it; and yet these are things that "the angels desire to look into." "Behold ye despisers, and wonder, and perish." How will you escape, if you neglect this great salvation! they admire the way of happiness that was contrived for your nature, and yet you refuse it. Will not all the wisdom of that upper world be directed against you? "Call now, if there be any that will answer thee, and to which of the saints wilt thou turn?"

2. It further enhances this wonder, that they should pay so much regard to one who came down into a nature beneath their own. The sin of the devils was pride, which some have imagined, (and they can do no more than imagine it,) showed itself by refusing offices of service to mankind. Whether it is so or no, the Scripture has not told us; but it is very apparent, "the elect angels" are filled with no such temper. They have loved the place of our dwelling, for they sung together at the making of the earth, and shouted for joy that there were creatures below themselves. We were then a little lower than the angels, to show us that it was no great condescension for

them to have communion with a nature so well made. But when it is said of our blessed Lord, that he was lower than the angels, there the words signify a greater distance from them. If you understand the psalmist of Adam, his inferiority to the angels was consistent with immortality; but Christ was made lower than they for the suffering of death, Heb. ii. 9. The distance between that frail and troublesome life that he submitted to, and their happiness, is inconceivable by us, who know so little what it is to be like them. Now if they regarded our nature in perfection, as that which was not much beneath them, is it not a wonder that they look at it in a person who calls himself "a worm and no man!" But they saw in him something above the angels, as well as beneath them. They knew that "he had by inheritance a more excellent name than they." See Him therefore, who had been "despised and rejected of men," admired by the angels of God. He whom "the builders refused," the wise and learned men had set at nought, "as a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence," is become "the head of the corner." He is in a place which the angels give way to let him take; for to none of them has he put in subjection the world to come. This is what the Scripture has delivered to us as a mystery, both in the Old and New Testament. "It is the doing of the Lord, and marvellous in our eyes."

I have no more to do upon this branch of the Christian religion, than to show you how it is a mystery of *godliness;* that, like all the rest, it makes us better, and brings forth fruit to account. That you may consider this in a distinct way, I shall lead you into the two heads of practical holiness, our duty and our comfort; and let you see, that each of these receives a happy influence from what is said of Christ Jesus in my text, that he was "seen," or admired and adored, "of angels."

1. The belief of this gives life and soul to our duty. It is a doctrine according to godliness, because from hence we are instructed in our worship and rever-

ence to a Redeemer, a courageous profession of his name, a dependence upon his grace as sufficient for us, and a care and love to his people. These you know, are so many beauties of holiness, by which we adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour; and whatever brings us into such a practice, must do a friendly part to our religion. It is thus that we "show forth the praises of Him who has called us out of darkness into a marvellous light." You will find that our Lord's being seen of angels, is a suitable and powerful argument, as will appear by going over the particulars.

(1.) We are called to the worship and reverence of Him who is our Redeemer. All believers, in every place, call upon the name of the Lord Jesus. This indeed supposes that he is God, otherwise no fulness from a creation, no acquired glories would make him equal to it; for we go on in the strength of the Lord, and make mention of his righteousness, even of his only, Psal. lxxi. 16. David had none in heaven but the Most High God, and no more have we. He alone was to be the strength of his heart, and his portion for ever; and all that went a whoring from him, were to perish, Psal. lxxiii. 25—27. Every act of worship that is not directed to the Supreme Being, is no better than adultery, a breach of our faith, and a provocation to his jealousy. It is a principle of natural religion, that none but God is to be worshipped; and it is never to be destroyed by any revelation, unless we suppose that God gives up a glory by the gospel, which he always kept to himself under the law.

I have shown you under the former head, that the angels pay their fullest and most proper devotion to Him who is "the King of saints." I considered the Scriptures that tell us so, without any force upon the words, in their plain and easy sense. I made use of no human interpretations to give them a bias, but laid them before you without any artifice, "comparing spiritual things with spiritual;" and I think, that from this it appears in its native evidence, that

all the angels of God do worship him; Him who came into the world, and is gone to the Father.

What an argument is this for us to come under the law to Christ! Well may we say of Him as Peter does to Cornelius, "He is Lord of all;" not merely by constitution, but antecedent to his appearing in our nature, and collecting to himself such a fulness of merit. He had a glory with the Father before the world was, John xvii. 5. Though the apostle takes notice that he came to the Jews, "according to the flesh," yet he "is over all, God blessed for ever, Amen," Rom. ix. 5. Certainly he does not speak of the one as consequent upon the other; that because he came of the Jews, therefore he is above the angels; and I cannot imagine why such a title does not carry as much in it, as the same words, chap. i. 25; when speaking of the gentiles, he saith, "They serve the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever, Amen." He sets his *Amen* to them both. That very name which he gives the Most High God, and by which he is distinguished from all the idols in the creation, is, that he is "over all;" as if that was the greatest he could say of him. And must it signify a supremacy of nature in one place, and only an eminent exaltation in another? Shall the words, "over all, blessed for ever," be the title both of a God and a creature? These clashes of interpretation upon the same phrase make our apostle guilty of what he abhors and condemns, uttering words hard to be understood, which he calls "speaking to the air," and that in a matter where a mistake is most fatal.

Here you see your company, who they are that lead on the worship of "Messiah the Prince." We may call upon them as the first rank of servants, "Bless the Lord, ye his angels, that excel in strength; bless ye the Lord, all ye his hosts, ye ministers of his that do his pleasure: praise the Lord, O my soul." The apostle speaks of the devotion that Christ has above, as a universal thing; that it runs through the creation; it reaches as far as religion

itself does; wherever there is any worship, He has it. "At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father," Phil. ii. 10, 11. The argument loses none of its force from the last expression; for it is certain, that all the duty we pay to Christ is "to the glory of God the Father." When the Son of man is glorified, God is glorified in him; and if God is glorified in him, God does also glorify him in himself, John xiii. 31, 32. But the question is, whether this bowing the knee, and confessing with the tongue, does not go as far as either ours or the angelic nature can do in a way of homage.

That you may take the full meaning of these words, observe their situation in other parts of Scripture. They are plainly fetched out of Isa. xlv. 22, 23. "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." Whether this is the Father, or the Son that calls, the argument is still the same; because the reason he gives for the dependence of the whole world is this, "I am God, and there is none else." That is the character which he maintains, and will not part with. "I have sworn by myself, the word has gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return: that unto *me* every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall swear." You see in this resolution, he declares himself to be God, and that there is none else; and shall this homage be paid to another which he demands to himself as the only God? Can we imagine, after such a declaration of his being alone in the Deity, that he would alienate any of that honour which he speaks of here as his peculiar property?

Nay, methinks this is mentioned as belonging to Christ with great enlargements; for by the prophet it is only demanded from "the ends of the earth," every knee, and every tongue *there* have their duty allotted them; but here we read of "things in heaven and in earth, and under the earth," that they are all bowing and praising. The apostle in his Epistle to the Ro-

mans, makes these accounts signify our appearance at his tribunal. "We shall stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. For it is written, as I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then, every one of us shall give an account of himself to God," Rom. xiv. 10—12. Standing before the judgment-seat of Christ, is giving an account of ourselves to God, and the proof we have of it, are those words out of the Old Testament, which are plainly affirmed of a Redeemer in the New.

See therefore how you ought to consider your great Saviour, and with what a compass a believer may send out his summons. "Praise him from the heavens, praise him in the heights; praise ye him, all his angels, praise ye him, all his hosts." "O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens!" What a pattern is here for your duty? Well may they that stand upon a sea of glass, and have got the victory over the beast and his name, cry out as they do, "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints! who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name?" Do what you find the angels have always done; obey his commandments, and hearken to the voice of his words; bow before him with reverence and a godly fear. Give glory to him who is worthy to be praised; and be sure to come into the great concert. "Every creature that is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I, saying, blessing, and honour, and glory, and power be to Him that sits on the throne, and to the LAMB for ever and ever," Rev. v. 13.

(2.) Another act of our duty is a courageous profession of his name. It is not enough that "with the heart man believes unto righteousness," but confession must be made to salvation. Therefore, "if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God hath raised him from

the dead, thou shalt be saved." This supposes that the acknowledgment of the mystery carries in it a danger. We are told of times when people would not endure sound doctrine; and ministers are either to quit their gospel or their reputation. If they will not bring down revelation to men's reason, and the rules of life to their lusts, they shall have the run of hell and earth against them. Briers and thorns are with them, and they dwell among scorpions. We are bid not to be "dismayed at their looks," Ezek. ii. 6. None of us is sufficient for these things.

The apostle thought it needful to exhort Timothy in an evil day, "Be not thou ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel, according to the power of God;" and in the same Epistle he takes notice of the different carriage he had met with among professors. He saith of Onesiphorus, "He sought me out diligently, and was not ashamed of my chain." But every one had not that integrity. At his first answer, all men forsook him, no man stood with him; and as he begs that that courageous professor might "find mercy of the Lord in that day," so he prays God for the rest of them, that it might not be laid to their charge, 2 Tim. i. 16; iv. 16.

The Scripture has expressed a great deal of value for what we do in testimony to the ways and cause of a Redeemer under the strife of tongues. He says to a church at Pergamos, "Thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith," Rev. ii. 13. When that name was going, they took faster hold of it. The same is observed of those in Philadelphia, "I know thy works; behold I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it; for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word; and hast not denied my name;" and he bids them continue so, "Behold I come quickly, hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown," Rev. iii. 8. 11.

To this glorious part of our duty, we are led by the consideration of what the angels do. They were not ashamed of him in the wilderness when he hungered,

and in the garden when he fainted; they made no secret of his perfections; they come out as the armies of heaven against the dragon and his angels, who assail a Redeemer's throne. See therefore what a number of professors you have to go before you. Remember the terror of that threatening, "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels," Mark viii. 38. Observe here the nature of our temptation; the opposition we receive is from adulterers and sinners; the former are in jest with all religion, and the latter are in earnest against it; so that from such a mixture you may expect a trial of "cruel mockings;" and if they can reach to it, of scourgings, and bonds, and imprisonments.

Carnal security will plead with a great deal of reason against the dangers of a profession then. "What signifies speaking for Christ in a lewd and scandalous age? I shall only be laughed at." Well, but if God has placed you among these people, he expects you shall appear for him. It is not enough that you say, "I love the Saviour, I am not weary of him;" the crime here mentioned, is being *ashamed* of him. Perhaps you will say, that you are not; you value his person, and speak well of his name. Well, but if you are ashamed of his words, of the revelation that he has given, it is all the same thing. You are to stick by his doctrine against all the sneer and banter of ungodly men; and if you do not, he will look as shy upon you, as you do upon him, and that at a time when you want to be owned; he will be ashamed of you before the angels, and tell them, "There stands a sneaking professor, one who held the truth in unrighteousness, who was more tender of his own name than he was of mine; he had rather my glory should suffer a robbery than his own reputation a blot. Despise him, O ye angels, let not such a coward come into the armies of heaven: let the *fearful* and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers and all liars,

have their part in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone." But how glorious is the reverse of this sentence, "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man confess before the angels of God!" for the King himself to own you in the face of the whole court, to tell the surrounding angels, "There is one who forgot every interest but mine, and every friend but me; receive him among yourselves, for he like you, has kept the word of God, and testimony of Jesus!"

Thus "the trial of your faith will be found unto praise and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ," 1 Pet. i. 7. What signifies bowing to the humour of those who "blaspheme that worthy name by which you are called?" What is their favour worth? This praise of men, that you love more than the praise of God, is nothing but a little putrid breath. But give all things the reputation they will have at last, and it is enough if the zeal that is now condemned comes then to be admired. "With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of man's judgment;" but the Lord will come, and "bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts, and then shall every man have praise of God," 1 Cor. iv. 3. 5. 'May my soul be under those powers of a world to come, and act in the whole profession of a minister and a Christian, with a view to such an acknowledgment before the angels of heaven.'

(3.) From his being "seen of angels," in the way that I have described, we are encouraged in our dependence upon his grace, as that which is sufficient for us. They admire him as worthy to receive honour, and glory, and strength, and salvation, and power, and blessing; as one who by the blood of his cross has reconciled unto himself things in heaven, and things on earth, and therefore here is enough for our confidence.

To this purpose, I would lead your thoughts to a scripture that has really suffered by our translation, and ought to have the sense of it retrieved. It is Col.

i. 19. The apostle speaks there of Christ Jesus, as having "in all things the pre-eminence," or the government among all persons; and then saith, "for it pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell." Thus we read it in our Bible, but there is no such word as *Father* in the Greek. Ὁτι ἐν ἀυτῳ ἐυδοκησε παν το πληρωμα κατοικησαι, "all fulness pleased to dwell in him;" or, "it pleased himself, all fulness should dwell there." For we find the following verses return the several actions upon himself, though our translation having made a mistake in one clause, carries it through the rest. Και δι' ἀυτε ἀποκαταλλαξαι τα παντα εἰς ἀυτον, ἐιρηνοποιησας δια τε αἱματος τε σταυρε ἀυτε ειτε τα επι της γης, ειτε τα ἐν τοις ὐρανοις. That word ειρηνοποιησας, "making peace," may be affirmed of Christ, of whom it is further said, that δι' ἀυτε, "by himself, he reconciles all things, εἰς ἀυτον, to himself. Nay, in the body of his flesh through death, he is to present you holy and blameless, and unreproveable, κατενωπιον ἀυτε, in his own sight."

So that, though the doctrine of the same person's both making and receiving satisfaction is laughed at, yet it is the plain language of this text, as well as several others. He presents us to himself; Eph. v. 27. he keeps us from falling, and presents us in the presence of his own glory with exceeding joy, Jude 24. He reconciles things in heaven; if you understand that of the angels, it signifies a confirmation in the original happiness of their nature; and he who could establish them can pardon you. If there is grace enough to keep the angels from falling, as several thousands of their partners have done, certainly there is sufficient to keep you by the mighty power of this God "through faith unto salvation."

(4.) Here is an argument for your care and love to the people of a Redeemer. If the angels for his sake are sent forth as ministering spirits to them, will you think it below you to love and attend them? Remember they are heirs of salvation, the children of a king, joint heirs with Christ, the price of blood, the candidates for glory. The spirits that stand round

the throne do not think it any reproach to come down among them. They encamp round about them that fear the Lord, to deliver them, Psal. xxxiv. 7. It is strange, that the heavenly guards should pitch their tents upon earth, and do it, not where God's people lived in prosperity, but they go to the poorest person, and into the darkest holes. They are employed to shut the lions' mouths in a den, to fetch an apostle out of a dungeon, to take up a beggar perhaps from a rich man's gate. The last news we heard of Lazarus was, that no creature owned him besides the dogs which licked his sores; and the next account tells us, he is in the arms of angels to carry up his soul.

See therefore how awkward a thing that loftiness of temper is, by which some people love to be distinguished. They never learned this from the angels. It is not the court air. It is quite out of fashion in heaven, to despise one of these little ones, for their angels do always behold the face of our Father which is in heaven. They have creatures to take care of them, who look God in the face. Let these noble examples teach you, "as the elect of God, to put on bowels of mercy, humbleness of mind, meekness, long suffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another." Learn thus to be generous, to "be pitiful and courteous," going about like so many angels upon earth, doing good to all men, especially, as they do, "to the household of faith."

2. We learn from our Lord's being "seen of angels" what will be matter of comfort to us, under any dangers by a profession, any troubles for the imperfection of grace, our concern in a dying hour, and our unbelief about a resurrection and a future happiness.

(1.) We may be exposed to great dangers in our profession, as I have already supposed. It is your duty to "stand fast in the faith, to quit yourselves like men, and be strong;" and if we had no more for it, than the word of our general and captain of salvation, "have not I commanded you?" it is enough for

a good soldier of Christ. But he has not left himself without a witness; we have arguments of another sort. For as the battle is the Lord's, so in a little while you shall know the joys of those that divide the spoil. This flows from every fountain of doctrine; all the truths of religion are to give you a hope in believing; but there is a particular force in the subject of my text.

You appear for Him who has all the angels in heaven to appear for him. You do not see either him or them; that would confound your zeal, and prevent your faith; but they are about you, though invisible. The prophet Elisha knew this; when his servant saw the chariots and horses invading the city, he cries out, "alas my master! how shall we do?" He has this answer, "fear not, for they that be with us, are more than they that be with them," 2 Kings vi. 15, 16. He might have said, there is a greater force with us, if he had spoken of no more than one angel; but he really insists upon a greater number, as appeared to be fact; for when the young man's eyes were opened, "behold the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire about Elisha." Indeed the apostle goes upon a higher argument than this, "ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world," 1 John iv. 4. And shall they who profess to be under so glorious a head, and are joined with so noble an army, be ashamed of what they do? No, we have "a high priest over the house of God;" Heb. x. 21, 22. one who has the government there, for he is a priest upon his throne. From this the apostle makes two conclusions; first, that we "draw nigh with a true heart;" and, secondly, that we "hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering." The one of these is as necessary as the other. A man is as much obliged to keep standing in the field, as kneeling to the throne: and what are we to hold fast? not only our faith, as a principle, or a doctrine, but the very profession of it, ἀκλινῆ, without wavering, without any *declension* or *turning*

from the truth as it is in Jesus. This is a part of your homage to that high priest who is over the house of God.

Remember, therefore, if you "contend for the faith once delivered to the saints," you have a good cause, a glorious head, and a vast alliance. And though there are many who "turn away their ears from the truth, and are turned unto fables," yet "watch in all things, endure afflictions," 2 Tim. iv. 4, 5. For there is "a crown of righteousness laid up for all those who love his appearing." And what appearing is that, but of a righteous judge? All Scripture agrees in this, "The heavens shall declare his righteousness, for God is judge himself," Psal. l. 6. We come to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to God the judge of all; and therefore, when we look for that blessed hope, it is "the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ." You may well bear a testimony to the character under which you expect him. "Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, Behold the Lord comes with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince them of their ungodly deeds, and hard speeches which they have spoken against him. These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaking great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage," Jude 14—16.

(2.) We are sometimes troubled at the imperfection of our graces, and the darkness of our evidence; and this sits heavier upon a believer, than all the noise and rattle of the world against him. He does not complain so much, that "without are fightings," as that "within are fears." Now the doctrine I am upon, opens a door of hope in this valley of Achor, and it is this, that though Christ suffer your graces to be weak, and your comforts to be interrupted, yet he that has done so much for the angels will not be unmindful of you. In some sense we may suppose them under the fears of falling away. They had no

covenant ordered in all things and sure, until he reconciled to himself what is now in heaven. Now there is one argument that may encourage our expectation of such a favour above theirs. We may say, as the men of Israel did to those of Judah, "We have ten parts in the king, he is nearer of kin to us." He is rather ours than theirs; for "verily he took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham," Heb. ii. 16. And therefore if he has done so generously by a nature that he never took into the relation, what may not we hope for from him who took part of our flesh and blood? Do not imagine that he who established them has left his people here below unsettled; no, the time is coming when your graces shall be like those of the angels, entire and perfect, and when your comforts shall also equal theirs, both in their fulness and security.

(3.) This is a support under the terrors of a dying hour. The believer may say, "This is what I am not used to; I have had grace to hear and to pray with, but never to die with. This is following my God in a way that is not sown, and a road that I have not trod. Now my feet are coming upon the dark mountains. I am to find that which never entered into my experience before, and never will again. I have often resisted Satan, but if the last battle turns on his side, all the rest will prove in vain." I do not tell you such a case ought not to strike you with awe. A man that makes a jest of death, was never in earnest for heaven. But this I will tell you, from him whose word alone you are to take in it, that he whose you are, will never leave you nor forsake you. Angels have been your ministering spirits before, and they will be so at last. You have found their care in a pinching world, you shall have it again. Satan will be your enemy; it is the concluding stroke, and therefore may be the most awful. But here are contending spirits that will give him battle, and they are sent forth "to minister unto them who shall be the heirs of salvation." This they have done all along; but

their service is with a particular zeal, when those heirs are just going to take possession. If they owned you in a distant title, in a claim that was not to be answered for several years, will they be unconcerned when you are getting out of your minority, and have but a few moments between you and the full inheritance?

(4.) This deserves to be your comfort under any doubts about a resurrection, or a future happiness. He who is "the resurrection and the life," and is called so, among other reasons, because it shall be brought about by the power of his voice, and the authority of his command, has angels to behold him, looking at his face to take his orders, as well as to admire his glory. Make no objections about the manner how the graves are to be opened, and the dust awakened into a second life; how souls who have lived loose and free in heaven shall come down again into their old habitations. These are mysteries, and would be no better than dreams, if we had not the word of a "God that cannot lie."

But the difficulties that appear in such things are gone, if you do but consider that angels are the officers, and Christ the guide of the whole concern. What is there which they cannot execute, when he thinks fit to command it? He is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, 2 Thes. i. 9. And from hence you may also conclude the happiness both of soul and body. He is now "seen of angels," and he shall be seen of you. You are his own, "the ransomed of the Lord," which they never were. Though he has done more for them in their creation, yet his love and pity has exceeded towards you in redemption; and therefore it is no wonder if with his original servants he also bring in his purchase and his chosen; for they, as well as the angels, "shall see his face, and his name shall be in their foreheads," Rev. xxii. 4.

CHAPTER VII.

GOD WAS PREACHED UNTO THE GENTILES.

In these words we enter upon the fourth branch of this great mystery, that promotes our godliness, and secures our salvation. We have heard of Christ, 1. that he was manifested; 2. that he was justified; 3. that he was seen; and now, 4. that he is preached. These are so many ways of spreading out his name, and serving the mighty purpose of redemption that he came about. His *manifestation* was to all those in Judea, who saw him, and heard him: he ever spake openly in the temple and synagogues, whither the Jews did always resort; John xviii. 20, he was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld him. His *justification* is more inward, and refers us to a secret witness, the testimony that is delivered and impressed upon the souls of his people; for Christ is in us as our hope of glory. He was manifest "in the flesh," by appearing in the reality of our nature; but he is justified "in the Spirit," which reaches no further than a principle of religion does: he is "glorified in his saints, and admired in them that believe." But, besides these two, he is *seen* and *preached;* seen no longer by us; for though we have known Christ after the flesh, henceforth we know him no more. The heavens have received him till the time of the restitution of all things. He is one "whom having not seen we love, and in whom, though now we see him not, yet believing we rejoice," 1 Pet. i. 6. "He dwells in the light which none can approach to, whom no man has seen, nor can see," 1 Tim. vi. 16. But yet he is seen in the glory of his person, the fulness of his reward, and the vast compass of his design. In all these he is "seen of angels;" the things relating to him are what they "desire to look into." They are ministering spirits about his throne, beholding his

face in righteousness, and satisfied with his likeness. We at present are that part of the family that cannot see him. "We walk by faith, and not by sight," 2 Cor. v. 7. He has left our world, and keeps in his hands the keys of the invisible state, Rev. i. 18; and therefore in this absence of his person, and the impossibility of having a full vision, he has taken another way to begin, and keep up his acquaintance with us. He is "preached among the gentiles."

The success of this we have in the next branch of our religion, that he is "believed on in the world." The one is the counterpart to the other. Preaching is telling mankind what he is, believing is taking in the report, which goes a great deal further than merely giving our assent to the truth of it; for it moulds and forms the soul to what we hear. Whilst we look at his glory, we are changed into the same image," 2 Cor. iii. 18. Believing is feeling as well as hearing. And this is so much the great business of religion, that you find the Holy Spirit has given us two branches of the mystery upon one head of honour that is done to Christ in the world. We have the means of bringing it about, and that is *preaching* him to the gentiles, and then the happy event of these methods, that he is *believed on* among those that fear him.

I am now calling your thoughts to the former of these; which, as I said before, contains the fourth branch of the Christian religion: He was "preached among the gentiles." I must observe to you, as I have done all along, that the report is made in the form of a history concerning the same person who had been mentioned before; so that the method, into which I shall cast my design from this part of the verse, will not be very different from that which I have taken in the whole subject.

1. To give you some account of what is here affirmed, that he was "preached unto the gentiles."

2. To show you, that this belongs to him as a *God;* he of whom these things are said, can be no other than the Supreme Being.

3. That there is something in it *mysterious* and wonderful, exceeding the comprehension of human reason.

4. That the design of this doctrine, and the virtue that attends it, is to promote *godliness* in all manner of conversation; it is an opinion that brings forth fruit to account.

I. I am to explain the thing itself that is here said of Christ Jesus, that the *God* who was "manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, and seen of angels," is now "preached unto the gentiles." There are two particulars under this head.

1. That Christ is preached; and,

2. That this is done among the gentiles.

1. What is the import of the expression, that he was "preached?" The word signifies the office of a herald, or, as some think, of an ambassador; and it comprehends no less than this, that he employs people to make him known, and to give a publication to the glorious design that he came upon. "Thus it is written," saith he to his disciples, "and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations; and ye are witnesses of these things," Luke xxiv. 46—48. To the same purpose they say, "We are his witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Ghost." "He showed himself unto witnesses, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead, and commanded them to preach unto the people, and to testify, that it is he who was ordained of God to be the judge of quick and dead," Acts. v. 32; x. 41, 42. The name of *preachers* that he has given to these his servants, leads us into the nature of their duty, and the tendency it has to bring on the happiness of the world. Their preaching takes into it these following particulars: declaring him to be the only Mediator between God and man; representing his sufficiency to answer all the danger of our souls; doing this in the plainest and most open way; showing his willingness to save those that are lost; per-

suading people to come unto him; asserting his right over the whole creation, and especially the church; and doing all this with an eye to that state where his glory shall be seen, and ours be complete.

This is preaching; it is thus we "fulfil the ministry that we have received, and testify the gospel of the grace of God." He that puts the brethren in mind of these things, is "a good minister, nourished up in the words of sound doctrine." Satan would direct our thoughts and zeal to something else; but the apostle saith to Timothy, "Meditate upon these things, give thyself wholly to them, (ἐν τούτοις ἴσθι, be in them, live there,) that they profiting may appear to all." "Take heed to thyself, and to the doctrine; continue in them," ἐπίμενε ἐν αὐτοῖς, in those fundamental truths which make up that doctrine; "for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee."

(1.) To preach Christ, is to declare that he is the only Mediator between God and man; and when this is preached among the gentiles, it is to turn them from the error of their way, and the vile abominations in which they were sunk. They had a multitude of deities, and as great a number of intercessors. "There be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, as there be gods many, and lords many;" but Christianity was to strike them off from all this dangerous impertinence in the greatest concern of their lives, and to tell them, that "to us there is but one God the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him." These are the main principles of our religion, that there is but "one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time; whereunto," saith he, "I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, a teacher of the gentiles in faith and verity."

This is that doctrine which he sent his servants round about the world with, that there is salvation in no other, nor any other name given under heaven among men by which we can be saved. It is what

he pressed upon the Jews in his own ministry. "All that came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them;" and again, "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." John the Baptist had before this been like "the voice of one crying in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. "One comes after me, who is before me." "He whom God has sent, speaks the words of God, for God gives not the Spirit by measure to him; what he has seen and heard, that he testifies, and no man receives his testimony; he that has received his testimony, has set to his seal that God is true," John iii. 32—34.

It is a going off from the simplicity of the Christian religion, and indeed from the whole design upon which we have it, for us to talk of any other Mediator besides him, who was in all points tempted as we are. He keeps the work entirely in his own hands, and will have it said of none but himself, that he is "the way, and the truth and the life, and that none comes to the Father but by him." And therefore, it is part of our ministry to show, that this is "he of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write." He that in the fulness of time was made of a woman, is that "seed of the woman" who should break the serpent's head, "Who was verily foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you," 1 Pet. i. 20. It was of him whom we now preach, that God spake to the patriarchs; for "the Scripture foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, in thee shall all nations be blessed," Gal. iii. 8. It is he of whom David speaks; for he, being a prophet, knew that God would of his loins raise up Christ to sit on his throne, Acts ii. 30. He is the root that should come forth out of the stem of Jesse, and the branch that should grow out of his roots, the bright and morning star, the root and offspring of David. In a word, it is he who was promised of God to the fathers; he that should come, neither look we for another. And from this we are

never to depart, being servants to God in the gospel of his Son, "who was made of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead," Rom. i. 3, 4.

(2.) When we preach Christ, we represent him as sufficient to answer all the danger that our souls are in. The poor heathen had a wild way of explaining the fall of man, and the redemption that God is carrying on, and yet they had some confused apprehensions about it. They saw that he who made them was angry with them; they felt a depravity in their manners; they strove to procure the Divine favour by sacrifice and offering; and the more devout any people were, the greater expense did they run into; so that the doctrine of original sin, and a satisfaction to the justice of God, seems to have made some general impressions upon our whole nature. They knew that they had undone themselves, and that it was not in their own power to become happy again.

Now, we must tell the heathen, and all mankind, that every contrivance to set ourselves aright with God, falls short of the design. We have nothing wherewith to come before the Lord, and bow ourselves to the Most High God; thousands of rams, and ten thousands of rivers of oil were a great deal for us to give, but too little for him to take. Giving our first-born for our transgression, the fruit of our bodies for the sin of our souls, was the highest act of self-denial; but it could be no better than atoning for one sin by another, for a less by a greater. Christianity is to tell the world, that all this will not do, that such a profusion of treasure and blood may be spared for two reasons; 1. because they are not sufficient to answer the ends; and, 2. because there is something else to prevent them. Christ has, "by one offering, for ever perfected them that are sanctified." The devotions under the law were to be repeated yearly, monthly, and daily; but as they had no more than a typical virtue, so the substance they refer to being come, there is an end of them. "Through this man

is preached the forgiveness of sins, and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses," Acts xiii. 38, 39.

We are to tell mankind, that here is one "able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them;" that there needs no more sacrifice by way of atonement. He appeared "once in the end of the world, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." He is a High Priest of good things to come; and not by the blood of bulls and goats, which being imperfect, must be renewed, but "by his own blood he entered into the holiest of all, having obtained eternal redemption for us."

And as he has carried along with him a merit that will be the foundation of perpetual claims, so he has the fulness of the Godhead dwelling in him bodily. He wants for no grace to make you a willing people, no more than for a righteousness to make you a pardoned people. "Ye are complete in him who is the head of all principality and power." He can begin his work upon the most unlikely persons, he can carry it on through the greatest dangers; for we are "preserved in Christ Jesus, and called." This is the good news that we bring to a desolate world which "lieth in wickedness," (ὑπο τȣ πονηȣ, under the power of the wicked one,) 1 John v. 19—to tell them that they may be saved, that God has laid help on him that is mighty; "an interpreter, one among a thousand." He is gracious to them, having found a ransom, and so they are delivered from going down to the pit. We tell the Jews, that what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh," Rom. viii. 4. is now brought about in a better and an easier way. God has sent forth his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and by making him a sacrifice for sin, has condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law may be fulfilled in them that walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

(3.) Preaching Christ is telling these things in the

plainest and most open way we can. The ministry of John the Baptist is called φωνη βοωντος ἐν τη ἐρημω, the voice of one crying or shouting in the wilderness. It is the publication that he gives to the world, as it was foretold in the very prophecy that refers to John; "the voice said, cry," "O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain," from whence they may spread out the report; "O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say to the cities of Judah, BEHOLD YOUR GOD," Isa. xl. 6. 9.

The doctrine we are charged with in particular, is the Deity of our Saviour. All the descriptions that we have of the ministerial work, represent it as contrived on purpose to tell the news abroad. "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that brings good tidings, that publishes peace; that brings good tidings of good, that publishes salvation; that saith unto Zion, thy God reigneth! Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing; for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord brings again Zion. The Lord has made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God," Isa. lii. 7, 8. 10. Therefore for us to be either afraid or unwilling to testify of him whom we are sent out to proclaim, is not making full proof of our ministry; it is actually undoing what we are set apart for. For "a necessity is laid upon us; yea, woe unto us, if we preach not the gospel," 1 Cor. ix. 16. We have in Christ Jesus the great example, as well as the glorious object of our ministry. "I have preached righteousness," saith he, "in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, thou knowest: I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart, I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation; I have not concealed thy loving kindness, and thy truth, from the great congregation," Psal. xl. 9. 10.

Ministers are set for the defence of the gospel as well as of morality. As they must blow the trumpet to warn sinners, and bid them turn from the evil of

their ways, lest their blood be required at their hands; so when the time comes that people will not endure sound doctrine, they are to watch in all things, to endure afflictions, to do the work of evangelists, and make full proof of their ministry. There is such a thing as betraying the faith that was once delivered to the saints; and if this is the crime of those who are charged to hold fast the faithful word, what can they expect when the chief Shepherd shall appear?

It is an argument, and a very powerful one to flesh and blood, that the doctrines of the gospel being run down as nonsense, cannot be maintained without danger; but a minister, who has any use of that faith that he talks of, who makes *that* world the place of his conversation, which is the subject of his report, will have an answer to every objection that rises from below. "Bonds and afflictions," saith the apostle, "abide me, but none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear to myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry that I have received of the Lord Jesus, and to testify the gospel of the grace of God," Acts xx. 23, 24. He charges the Colossians to "say to Archippus, take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it." And is that done by being silent in the cause, and unconcerned what becomes of the truth as it is in Jesus? No, it is our business "to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery that from the beginning of the world has been hid in God," Eph. iii. 9.

We are so far from being ashamed to talk of mysteries, though we are laughed at for it, that we must tell them our ministry consists of these, and we endeavour to make them see them, and what fellowship there is in them; that there is something communicated by such doctrines, and derived from them. Though they are above the comprehension of reason, yet they are prepared to nourish and feed the soul. Whether people will hear or whether they will forbear, we must let them know, that Christianity is a great deal more than the best instructions for duty,

and lessons for practice. There is an unintelligible part in it, what the apostle here calls a *mystery*, that from the beginning was hid with Christ in God.

It is no argument for us to be silent upon these heads, because the world will not endure sound doctrine. When a truth is run down, it is a time for you to "hold fast the profession of your faith without wavering." You must not "believe every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world," 1 John iv. 1. The apostle Paul had as much prudence as any man, and yet you find how he conducts himself in his ministry. When he is called to preach before Felix, the pride and injustice of that person direct him to speak of "righteousness, temperance, and a judgment to come." When he came to Athens, he struck at their darling practice; for in all things they were "too superstitious," and tells them, "The God whom ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you;" for "we ought not to think the Godhead is like to gold or silver:" "he dwells not in temples made with hands." And even among them he preaches Christ Jesus, and the resurrection from the dead, though they had called him a "babbler, and a setter forth of strange gods." And when he comes upon this subject again, as he speaks of the resurrection, "some mocked, and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter." When he preached to the Jews he knew no doctrine would be so grating to them as Jesus Christ, and he crucified. This was their stone of stumbling, the thing they could not get over, and yet he thus employed his ministry among them. When he went to Thessalonica, as his manner was, he goes into the synagogue, "opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and that this Jesus whom I preach unto you is Christ," Acts xvii. 3. Thus he did to the Jews at Rome; though they contradicted and blasphemed the things that he spake, yet he held on. No reputation of his own was of any value with him; he threw all that into the future glory.

It is a poor reason for ministers to conceal their faith, because others will not hear it. We read of quite another conduct. Certain false brethren were "unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty that we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage; to whom we gave place by subjection, no not for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you," Gal. ii. 4, 5. You see it was this that he had most at heart; and there is no fulfilling of our ministry, without a faithfulness to it. He could not have bid the elders of Ephesus farewell with such confidence, if he had not borne his testimony against all opposition; for, after the manner of men, he fought with beasts at Ephesus. But he could say at parting, "I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men." Why! "for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God," Acts xx. 26, 27, He did not shun to declare any part of it. The counsel of God certainly takes in the mysteries of religion, and in particular the glory of Christ, whose names are "Wonderful, Counsellor." Had he shunned to declare this, he had been guilty, and polluted with the blood of men. But upon the opening of his ministry about these things, he calls them to record, that he was pure; that whatever blot he went away with, there could be none upon the account of any unfaithfulness in his work. He might have a great deal of the reproach of men, but none of their blood stuck to him; that fell all upon their own heads; "There is nothing that I can have more dread of in my ministry, than that I should have said too little of Christ, and not have been zealous enough for the glory of his name." Happy are they who are witnesses for him, and neither ashamed of his person nor his words, before an adulterous and sinful generation. They shall find that he will be a faithful and true witness to them. "Who is a faithful and wise servant, whom his Lord has made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant

whom his Lord when he comes shall find so doing: verily I say unto you, that he shall make him ruler over all his goods," Mat. xxiv. 45—47.

(4.) We preach Christ as one who is willing to seek and save that which is lost. We cannot leave out his goodness when we talk of a Redeemer. "Herein God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us," Rom. v. 8. We are indeed to insist upon the terrors of the Lord, that, "as many as are under the law, are under the curse;" that a satisfaction must be made to the justice of God; for, "without shedding of blood there is no remission." But these things are so far from contradicting what is said of the love of Christ, that they rather exalt it. We cannot have a greater evidence of the regard he has to our nature, than when he was pleased to live in it, and to die with it. That he came down a little lower than the angels, not (as Adam was made) to live in all the fulness of paradise; but "for the suffering of death," that through that "he might destroy him who had the power of death, that is the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." What an example was here of a "good will towards men."

(5.) Our preaching of Christ signifies the pains we are at in persuading people to come to him. "We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled unto God," 2 Cor. v. 20. We must follow you with the doctrines of godliness, that God was manifest in the flesh: and what is the expostulation that arises out of it but this? "Why will ye die, O house of Israel?" We tell you there is hope in Israel concerning this thing. You may flee for refuge, to lay hold upon the hope set before you: and will you not come to him that ye may have life?

Indeed we are clothed with a great authority, or rather are the heralds of his. He has told us what to say in a way of demand, and in a way of threatening. We tell you that He whom you serve is "over all,

God blessed for ever;" that he will be a swift witness against his enemies, that whoever "believes not is condemned already," and "the wrath of God abides on him," John iii. 36. But though these are terrors of the Lord, we know and use them to persuade men. We call them to flee from a wrath to come; and in doing this, we must be supposed to tell them, that a way is found out, a new and living one, Heb. x. 20. "new" in opposition to that which the great God had once established, and which our first parents had broken, and therefore is now stopped up; and then it is a "living" way, as no death can come there, as life flows and streams out from it, as it has a vital influence upon those that enter into it, and as it leads into the life of another world. Thus our preaching is not only a display of doctrine to your understanding, but of argument to your affections, that you may receive both the knowledge and the love of the truth, and so may be saved. This is preaching of Christ Jesus.

(6.) We assert his authority over the whole creation, and especially over the churches: that he has the government upon his shoulder, that all power is given to him in heaven and in earth, Isa. ix. 6: Mat. xxviii. 18. This is an article that we must by no means part with. He will never give his glory to another, and it is a breach of trust for us to do it. "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake." His empire over the world is not so clearly seen as it will be; but that over the churches we must make as visible as we can, by owning no other authority. He speaks to his disciples of things pertaining to the kingdom of God, in so ample a way, that the dispensation we are under is complete; "Ye need not that any man teach you, but the same anointing teaches you all things; and is truth, and is no lie," 1 John ii. 27. This is the cause of God, to which his servants have borne a testimony; and "they overcame by the blood of the Lamb, and the word of their testimony," Rev. xii. 11. I will only add one note here; that

surely the asserting the Divinity of Christ, ought not to be called a denying his authority. It is strange that those people who do not believe his Godhead, should set up for the best friends to his empire. My saying that he is equal with the Father, can never be inconsistent with a belief that he is Head over all things to the Church.

(7.) In this preaching of Christ, we have an eye to that state where his glory shall be seen, and ours complete. "Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus," Col. i. 28. For this end we make him known, that you may "press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling." We tell you that which the natural man despises, and which the very people of God cannot think of without an awful confusion. We know but in part, and therefore can but "prophesy in part: but when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away." When we have our resemblance to his person, we shall be fitted for all the joys of meditation, being made like him by seeing him as he is. The rejoicing that we hope for, in the day of Christ Jesus, is that we have not run in vain, nor preached in vain.

2. The other part of the truth contained in this text, is, that he was preached unto the gentiles; by whom we are to understand all the rest of the world, who had been by the providence of God a long while distinguished from one particular people; for when he gave the word to Jacob, and his statutes to Israel, "he dealt not so with any other nation." Moses appeals to them as possessing the grand peculiarity of all history, having that in their experience which was never known any where else. "Ask now of the days that are past, which were before thee, since the day that God created man upon the earth, and ask from one side of heaven to the other, whether there has been any such thing as this great thing is, or has been heard like it? Did ever people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as thou hast heard, and live? Or hath God assayed to go and

take him a nation from the midst of another nation, by temptations, and by signs, and by wonders, and by war, and by a mighty hand, and by a stretched-out arm, and by great terrors, according to all that the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes?" Deut. iv. 32—34. He turns very often upon this great privilege in that long discourse. "Thou art a holy people to the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God has chosen thee to be a special people to himself, above all people that are on the face of the earth," Deut. vii. 6.

This argument God himself uses by way of reproach to them who had so many distinctions in their lot, and so few in their carriage. "Hear this word, that the Lord has spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt; you only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities," Amos iii. 1, 2. Nor does the great apostle of the gentiles deny this, though his ministry was directed at the levelling all those peculiarities, and showing the world that now they were at an end. Yet when he puts the question, "What profit has the Jew, and what advantage is there in circumcision?" He answers, "Much every way, chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God." And in the time that his soul was in all that agony about them, that he had "great heaviness, and continual sorrow in his heart, that he could wish himself accursed from Christ, for his brethren, his kinsmen, according to the flesh;" yet he owns, that to them pertained "the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises," Rom. iii. 1, 2; ix. 2—4.

Theirs alone was the *adoption:* no other people were accounted children, but rather spoken of as *dogs*, according to the phrase that our Lord used, when the woman of Canaan came to him. Theirs was the *glory* that filled the tabernacle and the temple, and appeared in the holiest of all. These were

things not so much as talked of in any other place besides Judah, where God was well known, and his name was great in Israel, in Salem was his tabernacle, and Sion was his seat. Theirs were the *covenants.* God never professed a relation to any people but them, having taken Jacob to himself, and Israel for his peculiar treasure. They were a people near unto the Lord, and concerning whom, he proclaimed what he did no where else, that he would be to them a God, and they should be to him a people. To them pertained *the giving of the law.* Never were statutes delivered with a purity unalloyed, and with a thunder undisguised, but among them. Other nations were left to walk after their own ways, but to them God himself came down, angels attending him, clouds and darkness covering the place, voices and flames diffusing the authority. "He came with ten thousands of saints: from his right hand went a fiery law for them." Theirs were the *promises:* "the covenants of promise" were of the same extent with the "commonwealth of Israel," Eph. ii. 12. For though God did not leave himself without witness to others, in giving them rain and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness; yet to these he opened out the great design of redeeming the world. This is called "the hope of Israel;" for though it came with a benefit to all mankind, yet the Jews alone could be said to hope for it, and none but the twelve tribes instantly serving God day and night had any ground to expect it. And the reason is plain from what the apostle advances further, "theirs were the fathers," men who in several ages waited for the consolation of Israel. The prophets, in whom the Spirit of Christ testified, were of their country. All the light that was given to the world concerning a Mediator came from them. And out of them Christ himself arose "according to the flesh." When he took upon him our nature, he appeared in their country. He was of the seed of Abraham, and the family of David, and came in person to none but his own. There he had his house, the

Lord came suddenly to his temple, Mal. iii. 1. He was the messenger of the covenant that God had made with them, and they alone professed any delight in him. He was raised up as "a horn of salvation" in the house of his servant David. And though he came as "a light to lighten the gentiles," yet he was in a particular manner "the glory of his people Israel."

So that you see the world was for a long time thus unequally divided into Jews and gentiles. By the former, no more was meant than a single nation, confined within narrow bounds. These were the favourites of heaven, and the greatest part of our nature was all the rest of the world. Now when Christ was "manifest in the flesh," and "justified in the Spirit," and "seen of angels," (they saw him up to his throne) he determined to widen his empire. He sat down on God's right hand, that from thence he might send the rod of his strength out of Zion, and have a willing people in the day of his power. He was to judge among the heathen, and wound the heads over many countries, Psal. cx. 1, 2, 3. 6. He therefore orders those whom he had put into the ministry, to preach him among the gentiles, where he was never heard of, not so much as expected, or at least not with those grounds of hope and clearness of evidence under which he had been revealed to the Jews.

This is one branch of the "Mystery of Godliness," that they who knew him not before, should have the joyful sound ringing in their ears. I am not yet got so far into my subject, to consider this under the notion that the text gives us of it, as a wonder and a *mystery*. I will therefore only pursue this one observation in two parts: first, That till the gospel came to be preached, God was all along narrowing the interest of religion, bringing it into straiter bounds: but, secondly, From the time of our Lord's ascension, he took quite other methods, enlarging both his interest and the ways of promoting it.

1st. You will see by going over some historical accounts, that until the gospel came to be preached

in this last and best edition, religion confined and drew in itself by every new dispensation. As for example,

(1.) When God had revealed that promise, which was the blooming gospel, that the seed of the woman should break the serpent's head, Gen. iii. 15, as it was delivered to our first parents, so it equally concerned all their posterity. But we are soon told, in process of time, that though Cain had some notions of natural religion, yet he was a stranger to the mystery and benefit of what had been revealed. For "by faith Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness, that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts," Heb. xi. 4. After his murder, Seth was born as "another seed, instead of Abel, whom Cain slew," and when he had a son, who was named Enos, "then began men to call on the name of the Lord," Gen. iv. ult.

There were then two societies. They that served God in a right manner, lived separate from the rest. Cain's posterity, though they are remembered for the invention of several arts, yet succeeded to the lot of their father—they were hid from the Divine presence. When this distinction wore out, and the sons of God (Seth's race) took wives of the daughters of men, vi. 2. it first confounded religion, making all wickedness run loose, and then it brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly. As they were alike in practice, God makes them alike in vengeance. "All flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth, and God said unto Noah, the end of all flesh is come before me."

(2.) After the flood, when our whole nature consisted of no more than what came out of the ark, Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japhet, and it is only the first of these by whom the true worship was maintained. For though God would persuade Japhet, and make him "dwell in the tents of Shem," yet many ages rolled off before that design took place. And as for Ham, he and his posterity were under a curse, and doomed to be servants of servants to their

brethren; so that here seemed to be another straitening in religion. In Adam's family God had one in two, in Noah's he had no more than one in three; and thus it held for a great many generations, till the fulness of time came to "bring his sons from far, and his daughters from the ends of the earth."

(3.) Even Shem's family grew degenerate and polluted; for though they did not run into the wickedness of the Canaanites, which made Abraham send among them for a wife to his son, yet they were guilty of idolatry, as you may learn from what Joshua tells the Jews, "your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor, and they served other gods." And afterwards when he puts them to their choice, he mentions "the gods which their fathers served on the other side of the flood."

Here then religion lodges itself in a single family: as the martyr Stephen observes, "the God of glory appeared to our father Abraham in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran." He is separated from all the rest of the earth. We read in his first remove, that his father Terah, and his nephew Lot came with him, under some convictions of their former error. Nachor they leave behind them, from whence the family was supplied with wives in two generations after. Terah dies in Haran; Abraham therefore and Lot were left alone in the possession of the true religion. "When his father was dead, he removed him into this land wherein ye now dwell." Lot, upon a quarrel, separates from Abraham, and goes to Sodom; and though he was a "righteous" man, yet we read of no good among his posterity. But the promise is given to Abraham after Lot was parted from him; and all the land he saw eastward and westward and northward and southward was ensured to him and his seed, as distinguished from those of his relations. The children of Lot are numbered among the heathen. The Ammonite and Moabite were not to enter into the congregation of the Lord, till their tenth generation; so that there was ground enough

for that advice, "look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and the hole of the pit whence ye are digged. Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you, for I called him *alone*, and blessed him and increased him," Isa. li. 1, 2.

(4.) Here is still a further narrowing of the Divine interest; for though Abraham's whole family were taken into an external covenant during his own days, yet one half of them are cut off afterwards. Ishmael was a child of many prayers, (O that he may live in thy sight,) and was blessed because he was Abraham's seed, yet the covenant is made only with Isaac; and therefore we find Ishmael's posterity numbered among the crowd of enemies against whom the Church of God were defending themselves by prayer; "The tabernacles of Edom, and the Ishmaelites; of Moab, and the Hagarenes; Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek; the Philistines, with the inhabitants of Tyre; Assur also is joined with them: and they have helped the children of Lot," Ps. lxxxiii. 6—8. Many of these people descended from those parents, who once professed the true religion. But this partition in Abraham's family was so remarkable, that the apostle makes it an allusion to the greatest distinction that is in the world, viz. between hypocrites and true believers. "Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, and the other by a free-woman; he that was of the bond-woman, was born after the flesh, but he of the free-woman was by promise; which things are an allegory; for these are the two covenants, the one from Mount Sinai, which genders to bondage. Now we brethren, as Isaac was, are children of the promise," Gal. iv. 22—24. 28.

(5.) Here is a further limitation; for though Isaac had the promise renewed to him, That in his seed should all the families of the earth be blessed, yet that is only to be understood of one half. He had two sons, Esau and Jacob, and "whilst the children were not yet born, neither had done either good or evil, that the purpose of God, according to election, might stand, not of works, but of him that calls, it

was said, The elder shall serve the younger," Rom. ix. 11, 12. Though both of them had a religious education, yet the benefits of it are very much confined to one of the branches. Indeed it is probable, that some of Esau's posterity kept up the worship of the true God, and that Job and his friends might be of that descent. But this wore out after a few generations, and there was room enough for God to say, "Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated." They fell into gross idolatry; they were called "the border of wickedness, and the people against whom the Lord hath indignation for ever," Mal. i. 4.

(6.) Jacob's whole family indeed remain possessed of the true religion, and all the twelve tribes are brought out of Egypt; but in Jeroboam's time ten of them fall off both from their king and their God. They wander into all the abominations of the heathen, so that there are but two tribes in which the Lord God of Israel is owned, according to his institutions. He rent Israel from the house of David, and they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat, king, and Jeroboam drove Israel from following the Lord, and made them sin a great sin. Ephraim compassed God about with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit; but Judah was faithful to the Lord and ruled among the saints. Thy calf, O Samaria, has cast thee off; mine anger is kindled against them; how long will it be ere they attain to innocency? Hos. viii. 5; xi. 12. 2 Kings xvii. 21. And this distinction held in some measure even after the captivity: for,

(7.) Whether the ten tribes returned with the two or not, as to me it seems probable they did, yet you find in a little time they revive the old prejudice. The Samaritans were supposed by the Jews not to be of the stock of Israel, but it is plain they always claimed it. Thus the woman of Samaria talks to our Lord, "Art thou greater than our father Jacob, who gave us this well, and drank thereof, himself and his children, and his cattle?" And she speaks as a sharer in the great hope of Israel, "I know that the Messiah comes, and when he is come, he will tell us all

things." But yet, whatever honour they might have from their genealogy, it is plain they were of a different cast from the Jews in their religion. This appears by the woman's confession, "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, and ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." And the quarrel between them had run so high, that the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans. But the smallness of the channel is what our Lord himself makes evident, when he tells the woman, who talked of their father Jacob, and the expected Messiah, "Ye worship ye know not what; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews."

(8.) There seems to be a yet narrower distinction. For the people who lived at some distance from the temple, though there was no dispute of their lineal descent, are accounted afar off. Thus it is said of the inhabitants of Galilee, where our Lord went about in his ministry, that they "sat in darkness, and in the region of the shadow of death." They called it "Galilee of the Gentiles;" perhaps not only to signify that it was populous, but to tell us that they were almost sunk down into the distress of the heathen. This was a country so remote from all religious fame, that as no good thing was ever expected out of Nazareth, so they bid Nicodemus, "Search and look, for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet," John vii. 52. So that you see, at the time of our Lord's coming into the world there was little of the true worship, except in Jerusalem, and a very small circuit of land round about it.

Thus the promise that was first given to Adam at large, as designed for his whole posterity, is regarded among his sons, only by one of the two; among Noah's by one of the three; among Shem's by a single family; among Abraham's, Ishmael is broken off, and Isaac chosen; of the sons of Isaac, the first-born Esau is rejected; of Jacob's twelve only two remained in the right possession. And though these may be supposed to spread abroad into the country, yet the worship of the true God lay in a little compass among

them. Thus was the empire of Christ narrowing itself for many ages, as if he had loved, not a diffusion, but a confinement. Divine Providence seemed to take delight in striking off people; and every new dispensation, though it made the covenant brighter, yet made the application of it straiter; and when it lay in the least compass, then was the fulness of time that "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, and made under the law," Gal. iv. 4. But,

2. From that period the Divine mercy entered into other measures. You may then see how religion widened in pursuance of ancient prophesies.

(1.) Our Saviour was a "minister of the circumcision," and only "sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel," but yet even then he gave a dawn of his being "preached among the gentiles." His chief conversation at first was in Galilee, and the places beyond Jordan; upon them, as the prophet foretold, a great light was made to shine. Chorazin, and Bethsaida, cities remote from Jerusalem, had mighty works done in them; and Capernaum, which had never been heard of for religion, was exalted to heaven. Nay, at Nazareth, he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all, Luke iv. 15.

Still further you find, that though he once ordered his seventy disciples not to enter into any village or city of the Samaritans, yet it is observed of himself, that "he must needs go through Samaria;" not merely for the conversion of a poor woman, who published her faith as soon as ever she had it, "Is not this the Christ?" but many others in that city believed on him upon a greater ground than her testimony, who said, "he told me all that ever I did;" they heard him themselves, and knew that "this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world." In his conversation he showed no abhorrence of that poor despicable people. He let it be known, that mercy had found a way to them. Thus the man, who was robbed and wounded in going down to Jericho, and had been neglected by a priest and a Levite, is relieved by a Samaritan; and of the ten lepers that

were cleansed, there was but one who returned, and with a loud voice glorified God, and he was a Samaritan.

Nay, he went further, and gave some dawn of the conversion of the gentiles. He said concerning the piety of the centurion, "I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel;" and upon that observes, that "many shall come from the east, and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven, but the children of the kingdom shall be cast out," Mat. viii. 10, 11. The poor Syrophenician woman that followed him with her importunity, and whom at first he would not answer, and afterwards called no better than a dog, has this noble character given of her at last, "O woman, great is thy faith, be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

But we have still a more copious instance. There were certain Greeks that came to worship at the feast; these come to Philip, and desire to see Jesus. Upon that our Lord makes this remark, "The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified; verily I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abides alone; but if it die, it brings forth much fruit," John xii. 20. 23, 24. He further tells them, that this inquiry of the Greeks was the presage of an opening glory; not that it would appear very much till after his death; for he compares himself and his interest to a grain of wheat, which is multiplied by its seeming to be lost. The ground that buries it revives and increases it. And thus, though he should for some time abide alone, yet after his sufferings it would be seen, that dying was only the spreading out of an enlarged life.

(2.) Accordingly at his death, he took away all that which had kept up the distinction between Jew and gentile, and so laid the foundation for their having the gospel. It was impossible that such a religion as the Jews had should be spread with any great success among the gentiles. Much of it was local; they must go to appear before the Lord three times in the year. There was but one temple for all the

world, but one high priest, and but one place which the Lord had chosen to put his name there. Now, if the duty of people consisted in going thither, it must be a great toil and expense to the nations afar off, and therefore he "abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances, for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby," Eph. ii. 15, 16. The typical meaning of all their services being answered, there is now an end of them. Neither at Jerusalem, nor on any other mountain, do we worship the Father; for if we do it in spirit and in truth, it is enough; the Father seeks such to worship him. "I will that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting." We may perceive God is "no respecter of persons."

(3.) He gave orders to his disciples soon after the resurrection, that they might be witnesses for him in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and "to the uttermost ends of the earth." "Go," said he, "and disciple all nations," "preach the gospel to every creature." Indeed he charges them to begin at Jerusalem, that they might have the first offer, and his resurrection appear in full evidence; but after that, all flesh was to see the salvation of our God. He would make bare his holy arm in the eyes of all nations. These instructions were altogether new; for though God raised up prophets in several ages, yet he did not use to send them abroad. But now, by virtue of that power that our Lord had in heaven and in earth, he will be sought of them that asked not after him, and found of them that sought him not; and therefore speaks by his apostles, Behold me, behold me, to a nation that were not called by his name, Isa. lxv. 1. Thus the Lord created "a new thing in the earth," that which their fathers had not heard of; they are to be unconfined in their ministry.

(4.) For this he gives them qualifications. They are endued with power from on high, the Holy

Ghost came upon them. That power signifies two things, first, their authority to go abroad; until then they were not to do it; he bids them tarry at Jerusalem till this commission was sent down. Secondly, it also imports their capacity to go upon this great expedition. For as the Holy Ghost came upon them in the shape of cloven and flaming tongues, so that is an emblem, both that they should be able to speak all languages, and that the word of the Lord in their mouths would shine, and search, and pierce, like a fire. As he sent them upon work that never any were employed about before, so he furnished them for it in a new way. The church of the Jews seldom wanted miracles among them, but they had never any thing like this; that a company of Galileans should be attended by vast numbers of devout people who were assembled from every nation under heaven, and these all hear in their different tongues the wonderful works of God, Acts ii. 9—11. It is reckoned a mighty thing, that when Moses was of a slow speech, God should be with his mouth, but what was that to this unravelling of Babel? At the building of that tower, God confounded their languages; at the building of a gospel church, he overruled that confusion, and gave in a miraculous remedy.

(5.) He did it in accomplishment of his ancient prophecies. The book of God is full to this purpose. Promises are made to those people who seemed the furthest off from mercy. I have shown you with what contempt Ishmael was cast out: we read that his sons were Nebaioth, Kedar, and several others; his posterity were some of the greatest enemies to the Church of God. The Ishmaelites and Hagarenes are in the black roll of sinners. The Psalmist complains that he sojourned in the tents of Kedar, and yet there is mercy for them. "All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered unto thee, the rams of Nebaioth shall minister to thee; they shall come up with acceptance on mine altar, and I will glorify the house of my glory," Isa. lx. 7.

The greatest oppressions that ever the Jews felt,

were in Egypt and Assyria, and yet even these were to have the offers of salvation. "In that day Israel shall be the third with Egypt, and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land: whom the Lord of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of mine hands, and Israel mine inheritance," Isa. xix. 24, 25.

If there could be any hope for those who lived on the great continent, yet methinks the islands were delivered to despair and darkness. As the sea seemed to have washed them off from the rest of the world, so they might say, as in another case, "the Lord has utterly separated me from his people." But even these are within the promise, "Listen O isles unto me, and hearken ye people from far." And when the question is put, "who are these that fly as a cloud, and as doves to their windows?" The answer is, "surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far to the name of the Lord thy God, and to the Holy One of Israel." Thus open is the promise, "I will gather all nations and tongues, and they shall come and see my glory; and I will set a sign among them, and will send those that escape to the isles afar off, that have not heard my fame, neither seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the gentiles," Isa. lxvi. 18, 19.

You have heard that our blessed Lord, as a reward to his sufferings, had his name spread further than ever the Father's had been; for he was preached among the gentiles: he has the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession, Psal. ii. 8. And if you do but consider that this was a glory which the Supreme Being did not think to take for several generations, I cannot suppose it will be any astonishment to tell you, that

II. He who thus distinguished himself by an honour that had not been known for many ages, could be no other than the *Most High God.* JEHOVAH is to be king over all the earth; and "in that day there shall be one Lord, and his name one." It would be

strange that a creature should have that for his reward, which the Great God himself has not; that the one should be only known in Israel, and the other (as if those limits were unworthy of him) should be "glorious to the ends of the earth." That the revelation which the Father made of himself reached no further than the Jews for a vast length of time, will not be denied. "He suffered all nations to walk in their own ways; the times of that ignorance he winked at:" and therefore, who is it of whom we read such things, that the isles shall wait for him? that his name shall be great from the rising of the sun, to the going down of the same? that he shall bring forth judgment unto victory, and on his arm shall the gentiles trust, Mal. i. 11. Matt. xii. 20, 21. Who is it that spreads out a greater glory than ever the God of Israel did? Is this a creature?

Sometimes he speaks in his derived character: "the Lord has called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother has he made mention of my name, saying, thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified. The Lord that formed me from the womb to be his servant, said,—— that I should be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength, he said,——I will give thee for a light to the gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation to the ends of the earth," Isa. xlix. 1. 3. 5, 6. The Jewish religion paid a mighty tribute to none but the Supreme God, and shall the Christian give more to a subordinate Deity? no, we adore what they did. "Is he the God of the Jews only? Is he not also of the Gentiles? It is one God, who shall justify the circumcision by faith, and the uncircumcision through faith."

I have shown you that his being "seen of angels," in the manner you have heard, was too much for one who is only some degrees above them; that their worship and adoration was so much allegiance to an uncreated nature. And I hope you will now see, that his being "preached to the gentiles" would be an excess that no true devotion can allow, if he was not

the Most High, and "thought it no robbery to be equal with God." I am sure it must be a robbery in thus making himself equal with him in honour, if he was not equal to him in nature.

In the pursuit of this argument, I shall remind you of those heads that I have already enlarged upon. In opening out the design and fulness of these expressions, I told you, that for Christ to be the subject of our ministry, was, that we should declare him to be, 1. The only Mediator between God and man. 2. Sufficient to answer all the dangers of our souls. 3. We are to do this in the most open way. 4. That he was entirely willing to save those that are lost. 5. We therefore persuade sinners to come to him; and, 6. Are bound to assert his right of government over the whole creation, and especially over the Church. You have heard enough to convince you that it is thus Christ must be preached. In this light he is held forth by the Scriptures of truth; and what we tell the world of him is upon these characters. I will now show you, that all these can be true of no other than a God, and our ministry would be a fraud to mankind, we should be found false witnesses both to you and to him that sent us, if we said all this of a creature.

This I desire your attention to, as that which is not only a revealed doctrine, but what enters into all your hope and duty. Many have a mind to pass it off as a dry speculation, whether Christ is God or no. They do not love doubtful disputations; these are things above them; they are hard to be conceived; it is carrying them out of their depth. Either it is not laid down in the Scriptures, or if it be, it is under so many folds of mystery, that God does not expect we should believe what he knows we cannot understand. That a man may be saved without it; it is not necessary to our holiness now, or the great felicity of another world. Thus do people sham the truth, who have not the confidence to deny it. It lets us see, that Satan has advocates of all sizes: that if he cannot bring you to make shipwreck of faith, he will bring you to

make a jest of it. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that without faith in Christ, as the only Mediator, a sufficient Saviour, a merciful and faithful High Priest, a King over the world, and especially the Church, thou art amongst his enemies? Now, there is no abstracting these from his Divinity; they belong to him as a God. The Scripture makes him the object of our confidence upon these heads, only because he is the Lord, and there is none else.

1. We can preach no person to the gentiles, as the only Mediator between God and man, but one that is God as well as man. "The same was in the beginning with God. This is the true God, and eternal life." Do any suppose that because he is called "the man Christ Jesus," that therefore he was not "God manifest in the flesh?" Are we afraid of meeting him in this lower title? no, "He is antichrist who denies that Christ is come in the flesh." But consider here, why must he as Mediator be a man? What necessity was there of his coming down into our very nature? The reason is plain, that he might stand upon a level with one of the parties, whose happiness he comprehended in the reconciliation. As the apostle argues, "A mediator is not a mediator of one." It is supposed that there are two in the quarrel; therefore in making up the breach, he must be as low as the offender. "Forasmuch as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he likewise himself took part of the same."

And is not the obligation as great and strong that he should be a God? If there was any necessity of his partaking of one nature, there must be the very same of his sustaining the other. What is the reason that an angel could not do as well? He is placed between the two natures, neither God nor man: and therefore if a partnership in both was not needful, such a creature must have had the most happy situation for this great design. But angels are both too high and too low: their nature was above the seed of Abraham, and therefore he that came to redeem us,

was made lower than they. Why? that he might be as low as man; but that would never constitute him a Mediator, unless at the same time he was as high as God. He was "in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, when he made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant." To say that he represented the Divine nature is nothing; for an angel, nay a man, might do that. Moses did it, and therefore it is said with respect to him, that "the law was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator," Gal. iii. 19. Jesus might in the same manner have represented both God and man, while he kept his first glory: for if he is ever so much better than the angels, he is nearer to man than God, supposing him to be no more than a creature. But in taking upon him our interest, he was to be made of a woman, it behoved him in all things to be like his brethren, Gal. iv. 4.

And what? is the concern of our nature managed by an equal, and that of the Divine only by a deputy? No, the "child born" is the "mighty God," the "Son given" is the "everlasting Father," Isa. ix. 6. Job gives you the true notion of a Mediator, when he complains that all the creation was not able to furnish one. Speaking of God, he saith, "He is not a man as I am," and therefore, if there is any agreement, it must be by one who is upon a level with each party. "Neither is there any daysman between us, who may lay his hand upon us both," Job ix. 32. This daysman, this umpire in the grand debate, is supposed not only to come with designs of peace, but as one who is fitted to the two contenders; he must lay his hand upon us both. Now, as it is easy to imagine what he means by laying his hand upon man, how daring must the presumption be that any creature should in the same sense lay his hand upon God? "Who has directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counsellor, has taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him? To whom will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One," Isa. xl. 13, 14. 25.

There are two sorts of mediators; first, one that has no interest in either party, what we call an indifferent person; secondly, one that has an interest in both. Our blessed Saviour was not a mediator of the former sort, but only of the latter. Nay, indeed, there could be no mediator that was unbiassed to both parties. Angels must have joined with God against man, devils would have taken part with man against God; and therefore our Mediator must be so placed between the two adversaries, as to partake of the concerns of both. In order to make him properly a party with us, he must be truly man; flesh of our flesh, and bone of our bone. And does not the very notion of a Mediator tell us, that he could never manage the interest of the Divine nature, if he was not as truly God?

So that his Deity is not an uncertain or a distant speculation; you see it enters into your hope. If he was no man, and if he is no God, we have had no Mediator, the war keeps open; and if there is no reconciliation, there is no pardon. "Our preaching is vain, and your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins." If he was not God, his pretending to secure the Divine glory by a satisfaction was exercising himself in things too high for him. He might have a pity for man, but no creature was great enough to take into his hands the interest of God, who has expressly told us, that "he put no trust in his servants," Job iv. 18. Not that they ever deceived him; but the meaning is, that there is one affair which he will keep within himself, which none of the spirits about the throne can be equal to. And what can this design be, that none of the saints are let into, as managers or agents, but the redemption of his people?

(2.) In preaching Christ Jesus, we represent him to the world as sufficient to answer all the necessities of their souls, both by way of atonement for them, and of conquest over them; that he paid a full price, and that he is possessed of a complete fund. We do not call them to the vain practice of the heathen religion, to trust in a God that cannot save. If there was any

thing needful to their pardon that he has not done, or to their healing that he cannot do, in vain would salvation be hoped for from him, any more than from the multitude of mountains. But we tell the gentiles, that he is one that is mighty, able to save to the uttermost; that whoever believes in him shall not be confounded; that the ends of the earth may look to him and be saved, Psal. lxxxix. 19; Heb. vii. 25; 1 Pet. ii. 6.

Now, upon what foundation can we talk so at large, but because he is the Lord, and there is none else? He speaks of himself, "I am Jehovah; there is no God besides me; a just God and a Saviour, and there is none besides me. Look unto me, and be ye saved all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. Surely shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength; even to him shall men come, and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed; in the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory," Isa. xlv. 21—25.

We durst not say of a creature, let him be ever so glorious, that "by one offering he has for ever perfected them that are sanctified," Heb. x. 14. Observe there, what he gives them is a perfection. This perfection is for ever; it includes their sanctification, and it is by no more than "one offering." The devils are a great sacrifice to Divine justice; but though that execution has continued so long, they are not so much as sanctified. The Jews had a high priest by Divine appointment, who sanctified the people, but they were never "perfected;" what he did to them must be repeated every year. But here is one offering that held for the space of three hours, and this avails to the full pardon of all the saints that ever were, or ever will be, either in earth or in heaven.

It is plain the merit does not arise from either the extremity or the length of his troubles. Another person's body might have been exposed to the same torture, and yet it would not avail as a propitiation for

one sin. So that the value of this death is taken from *his* dignity that endured it: and in that case we must consider him as having more than a dying nature. If he was no higher than an angel, he must be too high for a cross. He died as a man, and what must he be more than man, to give that death such an extension of merit, as to make an atonement for those vast numbers out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation?

Had he been a creature, though never so highly exalted, his death might be looked on as heroical; but not as atoning, because it was impossible that such a one should lay the Divine nature under any obligation. "For who has first given to him, and it shall be recompensed to him again?" As for example, an angel may be very dutiful, but he is incapable of having a claim upon God; and the reason is plain, because he can do no more than he is obliged to do. And if you will suppose a creature higher than the angels, the more glory you imagine to be in him, the less is he capable of deserving for another; because all his capacities are pre-engaged.

But now, in order to our Lord's being a sacrifice, that is said of him which could never be true of a creature, that he was "made under the law," Gal. iv. 4. The whole creation are under one law already; nor can they merit any thing from God by laying themselves under a new one. It is too late to have it said of the angels; for he made them spirits, and his ministers a flaming fire: and therefore, when this is affirmed of Christ, it must be understood of something new, what nothing but his own consent could bring upon him. And it is of the same nature with what he says, "A body hast thou prepared me," such a clothing as I had not before: so thatt his could be only true of one who was eternally above law; and that is more than can be said of any creature, let him be ever so glorious.

I am aware of an answer that some will give to this, that he was made under the ceremonial law, that being a minister of the circumcision, it became

him to fulfil all righteousness. This indeed is true enough; but I think it very plain, the law the apostle says he was made under, is not that, because he goes on to tell us the reason of it, it was "to redeem those that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." Observe here, he speaks this to the Galatians, gentiles who were never under the ceremonial law of the Jews, and therefore needed no redemption from it. He came under the same law with them; and that was the law that the whole creation is under, the covenant of works. Now this, as a creature, he must have been under *before*, and therefore his taking upon him that obligation *then* would have been of no avail.

No wonder therefore that he is called "Jehovah our righteousness," Jer. xxiii. 6; for though the dying by which he brought it in showed him to be a man, yet the very bringing in that righteousness proves that he is the great Jehovah. Nor need we be amazed, when God awakes his sword against a man, that he considers that man as his fellow, Zech. xiii. 7. This is more than ever he called an angel; for "who among the gods may be compared unto the Lord?" Ps. lxxxix. 6, and yet he says it to a man, and that in a case when he was going to show his human nature in the most lamentable way. The very awaking of the sword against him was an argument that he had something about him weak, and vain, and passive. He could not upon this consideration be a "fellow" to God; for with regard to that he calls himself "a worm, and no man." And is it not strange that in the very worst of our nature, he should be represented as equal to God? But it shows us, that though the sword killed him as a creature, yet the Father had taken his aim in vain, the blow had passed for nothing, if it had not fallen upon his "fellow."

Such a phrase is that which I have some time ago brought into the service of this argument, "Take heed to the Church of *God*, which he has purchased with his own blood," Acts xx. 28. To talk of the

blood of a God, of a dying bleeding Deity, is a force upon all language; but the meaning can be only this, that though he who died was plainly a man, yet there must be another consideration of him. He bled as a man, but he purchased as a God. Being the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person, by himself he purged our sins. He that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and has made us kings and priests unto God and his Father;—he is alpha and omega, the beginning and the ending, the Almighty, Heb. i. 3. Rev. i. 5, 6. 8.

The same may we observe of his other work as a Saviour, and that is making a willing people; having grace enough to produce the change, to carry on the reformation, and bring them at last to heaven. This the Scripture does sometimes affirm of the Father. Faith is the operation of God, who raised Christ from the dead. He is the author of every good and perfect gift, who is the Father of lights, without any variableness or shadow of turning. Sometimes the Son claims it as his own performance. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness," Psal. cx. 3. And sometimes we are said to be "born of the Spirit." Our conversion is by the power of the Holy Ghost; it is he that quickens.

And though the scheme that is so much admired has given us a subordination of these three, yet we find the greatest work, that our thoughts are able to conceive of, ascribed to them all. Now, who is it that can create in you a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within you? Psal. li. 10. We know that none of the gods of the heathen can give rain, nor can the heavens themselves, without a Divine appointment, give showers, though they are so full of them. Now, must he be a God who waters the earth? and may a creature cause "his doctrine to drop as the rain, and his speech to distil as the dew?"

Have you no other than the Supreme being for your author? Is it he that has made you, and not you yourselves? Is he the potter, and you the clay?

And can the other creation, which is more difficult by the opposition that it meets with, and more glorious by the happiness that it rises to, be done by one who is not God? No, there must be the "exceeding greatness of his power" to work faith in us. Are you to be "sanctified in Christ Jesus," and is he no more than a creature as yourselves are? I am obliged to the saints, the excellent of the earth, as the helpers of my joy, and more so to the angels, as the guardians of my soul; but there is something that I want, which neither the one nor the other can give me, and for this I am directed to a Redeemer. Now, his being stronger, and more glorious than they, is not enough, unless he is omnipotent. I can never think he will be able to "change my vile body, and fashion it like unto his glorious body," if it is not from a power by which he can "subdue *all things* to himself," Phil. iii. 21.

(3.) I told you that in preaching Christ Jesus, we are to make a public discovery of him. We must not conceal his righteousness and his truth from the great congregation; and in that we are to run all hazards: but this is more than we owe to a creature. It is as much, I am sure, as we can possibly do for a God; and it is a pity that there are no bounds set to our zeal for him, if he is not so. Worshipping an angel is reckoned idolatry, and a gross wickedness, and let no man beguile you into it, Col. ii. 8. Suppose you had seen any of those who counted all but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus their Lord, and asked them, "Why do you take all this pains for one who is no more than a vicegerent? Have you any reserves for the principal? Can you possibly go further for the great God, than you do for this glorious Deputy?" They might answer, It is he that "shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off;" and therefore as "all people will walk every one in the name of his god, we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever," Mic. iv. 3. 5.

This had been a strange way of preaching both to Jews and gentiles. As to the Jews, if they had not

taken the Messiah to be a God, what had they got by the dispensation? What was there in God's speaking to them "by his Son," more than those "divers manners" that at "sundry times" he had taken with their fathers by the prophets? It is true, we read that Moses had them that preached him in the synagogues every Sabbath day; but preaching Moses was quite a different thing to them from preaching Jesus. There was no pretence of engaging their trust and dependence upon Moses; he was never called their Saviour or their Advocate. And so, those expressions of their being "baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea," 1 Cor. x. 1, 2, never did, and never can mean, that they were called by his name, or owned a Divine authority in him. But thus did John the Baptist proclaim himself to them. He was "the voice of one crying in the wilderness." When he called himself so, it was to the Jews, who would easily turn to that Scripture where this was foretold. There they might read in the plainest language. "O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid," Isa. xl. 9. This does by an undeniable connection of the passages refer to the coming of Christ Jesus. And what are they to say in this public manner? "Say to the cities of Judah, behold your *God*." Supposing they were to make all this solemnity for a creature, what could they possibly do more for the Most High? Solomon knew that God himself filled the house with his glory. It was no angel that managed the cloud, though such a one might have done it. They adored the discovery that God made of himself. And what? was a God in a cloud the Supreme God, and a God manifest in the flesh only a subordinate? No, he that gave peace in that place, and made the glory of the latter house greater than the former, is the Lord of Hosts, Hag. ii. 9.

Are ministers ordered to lift up their voice with strength, to stand it out against all opposition, and not to be afraid in proclaiming a mere name, a bare title?

The prophet, in his discourses, takes off all surmises of that nature, when he describes the God we are to speak of. "Behold, the Lord God shall come with a strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd, he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and shall carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young." You will easily allow the fitness of this character to our blessed Lord. Now, he that does these things, has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out the heaven with a span, and is called afterwards the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth, who faints not, nor is weary, and there is no searching of his understanding, Isa. xl. 10—12. 28.

As impertinent would it have been to go among the gentiles with a report concerning a creature; it would have done no more than to refine and elevate their idolatry. Their fault was not worshipping the true God, and doing service to those that by nature are no gods. Bowing before the work of their hands was the aggravation and the folly of the crime: but the first error lay in paying this homage to any thing; and had they chosen the best of the creation for their idol, it was all one in the substance of the action: the guilt had been the same to worship an angel as to worship a fly; because it was an alienation of that which could be only due to their Maker.

And must Christianity, which is revealed to bring them to their God, rather keep them from him? They were bid to believe in Christ Jesus, to call on him, to do it in hopes of salvation, to lay the whole weight of their faith and confidence there: and is not this as much as they could do to the true God? Do you imagine, if the apostles knew Jesus Christ to be no more than a creature, that they would in so loose a way have recommended him as the object of all devotion and assurance? and this among people who had gods many, and lords or mediators many, before? Would they not have distinguished a thousand times

between the duty they claimed for a Mediator, and that which was due to the Supreme Being; because this was the very rock upon which the heathen had been split before? Why would they in so unguarded a manner speak of him as a God, without telling the people that they only used the word in a lower sense? What pity is it they should let the gentiles be carried away by an error so much akin to that which they were brought up in?

Had some preachers of the new scheme in our polite age, gone upon the ministry, there had been no danger; they would most certainly have taken care every time they called Christ by the name of God to explain it to them, that he was not self-originated, if such a rumbling word may be called an explication. There had been no snare in their prayers or sermons, no ascribing of glory to him, but rather through him to another. We should have had a gospel well guarded with critical distinctions. But it is plain the apostles went on in a more incautious way, and made so little difference between the essential glories of the Father and Son, as has tempted those who felt the power of their gospel to think there was none. Nay, really, as far as I have looked into the Mahometan religion, I must needs own, that it is a scheme more open and less deceitful than the Christian, if Christ is not God. That person never called himself more than the great prophet. He takes no titles in common with the Supreme Being; and therefore his followers are in no temptation to believe him a God, because he never called himself so; but with us there are many passages that must be a snare to our souls, if they do not reveal Christ to be the great object of our faith.

(4.) In preaching Christ Jesus, we declare his willingness to save them that are lost. It is true, this may be in a creature. Angels have a pity to our nature as it is forlorn, and a delight in it when it is renewed. The saints put on, as the elect of God, bowels of mercy; but yet the concern that a Media-

tor has for the souls of men, is laid down in those characters that belong chiefly to God.

When Job speaks of the Divine compassion, he represents it as flowing from a Creator, "Thou shalt call, and I will answer, for thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands." He looks upon these unhappy people as things or persons whom he has formed; and in that view the Scripture all along delivers it to us. With the same propriety does our Lord speak of his elect. When he was in the world, it is said, "the world was made by him." He came to redeem a part of his own creation. For though we have "redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins," yet "all things were created by him, and for him," Col. i. 14. 16. Thus he says of his people, when he compares himself to a shepherd. They are "my sheep," and describes a hireling, as one "whose own the sheep are not," John x. 27. It is true, he mentions the Father as making the choice, "thine they were, and thou gavest them me;" but even in that prayer, when he appeared in the form of a servant, he speaks of a united and common possession, which would have been too much for a creature. "All mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them."

(5.) Our preaching is persuading sinners to come to him, that they may have life. For "in him was life, and the life is the light of men." But what a baulk is it to our argument, to tell them he is not God? One of the noblest notions we can have of the Deity is, that with him "is the fountain of life." "In him we live, and move, and have our being," was the plainest account that the apostle could give of the Most High God to the Athenians: and would he say that of him that might be as well affirmed of a creature? Is it not too much for a dependent being to say, "I am the resurrection and the life; whosoever believes in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live?" John xi. 25. The meaning was not, that he who should die, should rise again and live, but

the names he here takes upon him signify an almighty influence.

We should be ashamed to call people to depend upon one that is not God. "All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn unto the Lord, and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee, for the kingdom is the Lord's, and he is the Governor among the nations," Psal. xxii. 27, 28. "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake," 2 Cor. iv. 5; for the sake of his honour and empire. Whither should a people seek but to their God? and is our ministry inviting you to any less? No; as Thomas called him "My Lord and my God," so all the Scripture is written, "that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing we might have life through his name."

(6.) We proclaim him as the great Head over all things unto his Church. We own no other authority; but this is so far from being inconsistent with the belief of his Divinity, that we durst not say so much of him if he was not God, and had not "the fulness of him, who fills all in all." Sometimes he has represented his relation to the Church by that of a marriage; and especially the gentile church is called to remember, that he is her Lord, and she should worship him, Psal. xlv. 11. But how assuming would this be for any creature after the plain language of that ancient promise, "Thy Maker is thy husband, the Lord of hosts is his name, and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel, the God of the whole earth shall he be called?" Isa. liv. 5. Is it likely that one who is no more than a vicegerent deity would be rival to him who gave this assurance? Or is the Church under the New Testament placed in relation to a lower head than that under the Old? No, his empire shall endure for ever. He is spoken of with all governing perfections, One that searches the hearts, to render to every man according to his works; one that is with his people always to the end of the world; one who lives in them, and they in him; of whose fulness

they receive, and grace for grace: and therefore we must say to Zion, "THY GOD reigns," Rev. ii. 23: Mat. xxviii. 20: John xiv. 20; i. 16.

III. We are to consider this branch of our religion as a *mystery;* one of those things that man's wisdom teaches not, and which we can no otherwise know than by "comparing spiritual things with spiritual." That "God" should be "manifest in the flesh," is a doctrine that appears to our wonder; that he should be "justified in the Spirit," carries us still further beyond our depth; his being "seen of angels," and adored by a nature into which he never entered, swells up the admiration of the believer; and now it is another article of surprise, that he should be "preached among the gentiles," if you do but consider the following particulars.

1. It is mysterious, that the gentiles, who were neglected for so many ages, should have Christ Jesus preached among them. What answer can be given to these two questions? Why God was so long silent to those people, and why he spoke out at last? That the wilderness and the solitary place should be glad, and the desert rejoice, and blossom as the rose: that the glory of Lebanon should be given to it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, that they should see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of the God of Israel! Isa. xxxv. 1, 2. We can resolve it into nothing else but his own good pleasure, the counsel of his will; even so it seemed good in his sight.

You know what diminutive names the methods of Providence drew upon those poor people. The Jews called them no better than *dogs*, and our Saviour himself makes use of that language. The doctrines of religion were esteemed "the children's bread," and by no means to be cast unto those for whom they were never designed. Thus it held for many generations, and yet at last, the gospel, that seemed to have crowded up itself, took pleasure in a diffusion. The great God gave such a turn to the course of his providence as he never had done before, and

unravelled all the dispositions of former ages. They who were "in times past gentiles in the flesh, called uncircumcision by that which is called the circumcision in the flesh made with hands; at that time were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus, they who were sometimes afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ," Eph. ii. 11—13. Well might he say, that he would create a new thing in the earth, which had not been conceived or expected.

Where shall we look for the springs of this motion but into that sovereign goodness, that is gracious because it will be gracious, and shows mercy where it will show mercy? Who can account for the distinction that he made between one of Noah's posterity from the other two? Why must the revelation of a pure gospel and a future hope be confined to them? Why did it after that still run narrower, in the channel of one family? He acted in this as the proprietor of his own mercy, who gives no account of his matters, either in grace or nature.

And the question is as hard, why he should afterwards break down the inclosures of his own making, and send his truth abroad without any limitations. By revelation he made known the mystery, "which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto the holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ, by the gospel," Eph. iii. 3, 5, 6. If there was any reason for keeping it as a secret from some part of mankind, why did not that reason hold? Why must the argument of revealing himself to a peculiar people be only temporary, and he who delighted in the name of the God of Israel, take pleasure in being called "the God of the whole earth?"

Was there any likelihood, that they who had been struck off should ever be taken in again? Or that

Japhet, who sunk into the same idolatry with Ham, should be persuaded to dwell in the tents of Shem? This stands as a wonder in our Bible, and it can appear no otherwise, considering that "when the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel," Deut. xxxii. 8, 9; i. e. in ranging the whole world he had his eye to one nation, and gave the rest their shares, so as to serve the interest of these. For the Lord's portion was his people, Jacob was the lot of his inheritance, that which fell to him in the dividend that his providence made. And yet after this, the love that used to keep within bounds shone out at large, and became the glory of the universe. I must own, that such a widening of religion was foretold, and therefore could not be a doctrine unknown to the fathers; but if we had taken our notions from appearances, we should have thought that God's choice of the Jews, and his neglect of the gentiles, had been for eternity. Because,

2. These gentiles were no way prepared to receive the news of a Saviour when he came to be preached among them. All nations walked in their own ways, and at Athens, in particular, they thought the apostle a babbler, a setter forth of strange gods. What a train of ceremonies, deliverances, and revelations had the Jews on purpose to establish their faith, and lead on their hope towards a great Redeemer? Scarce a prophet arose, but besides his message to them, that related to the particular duty and mercy of that day, he was still looking and talking further, foretelling things to come; as the apostle says to the Jews, that Moses was not only a servant to his own day, but a witness to ours. He was raised up and furnished with a greater Spirit than what might bring them out of Egypt. There was a prospective view in all that he said and did, a reference to future generations; for he told them, that God would raise up unto them a prophet like to him.

Nay, says Peter, "All the prophets from Samuel, and those that followed after, have likewise foretold of these days," Acts iii. 24.

Though we are apt to run through those books as so many histories that reached no further than to their own ages, yet you see he looked upon them all as connected with those last days in which God has spoken to us by his Son. When Abraham was called out of Ur of the Chaldees, God not only promised him a great posterity, and a fine country, but the glory of the covenant lay in this, that in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed. To this end, when they were formed and modelled into a people, they had laws, judgments, statutes, and ordinances. These were "figures for the time present, a shadow of good things to come." Thus did God think fit to train them up, that all their worship should be directed to him, who is called the great "hope of Israel." That Christ should come to *them* in person, and be preached among *them* after his resurrection, is no great wonder, as the apostle tells them, "Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, And in thee shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you first, God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you in turning away every one of you from his iniquities," Acts iii. 25, 26. And to this they gave witness in another place, "It was needful that the Gospel should first be preached unto you," Acts xiii. 46. This agrees to the order that Christ left with them to begin at Jerusalem. They were a people that sought him, and inquired diligently after him. "Theirs were the fathers, and of them as concerning the flesh Christ came," Rom. ix. 4, 5.

But to the gentiles he is revealed all at once; not like the sun in a clear morning that advances and opens his glory by degrees, but rather like a sudden rush of light in a cloudy and dark day. When he sprinkles many nations, that which had not been told them shall they see, and that which they had not heard shall they consider, Isa. lii. 15. This was a

matter that could not enter into the imaginations of men, and therefore when the Apostle brings in a proof of it out of the Old Testament, he delivers it with this remark, that "Esaias is very bold," he dares to say it, "I was found of them that sought me not, I was made manifest to them that asked not after me." So "he saith in Osee, I will call them my people who were not my people, and her beloved that was not beloved," Rom. x. 20; ix. 25.

They are to hear of him without any preparation of types and sacrifices. They had no paschal lamb to tell them of the great atonement, no high priest to represent the person of a Mediator, no sprinkling of blood to signify the virtue of his death, no temple to be an earnest of his incarnation. He came to them without any preliminary. This was the manner of entering that the Gospel had among them, That they turned at once from idols to serve the living and true God, 1 Thes. i. 9.

Though God was very near two thousand years in training one nation for a Redeemer, yet without any dawn he darts the light of the glorious gospel among others. Upon which the apostle puts the question, "What shall we say then?" as if he should say, We are quite lost in the mystery, and know not either how to get into it, or how to get out of it. It is an entertainment, but yet it is a surprise, "that the gentiles who followed not after righteousness," never pretended to it, "have attained unto righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith." Well may we say, O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! Who has directed the Spirit of the Lord, and who has been his counsellor? Who gave certain rules to that Spirit for so many ages, how to guide and proportion the light that he distributed? Or who at last set him at liberty, to do in redemption as he did in creation, to move upon the face of the waters, and bring light out of darkness all over the world?

What consistency can we find between the me-

thods of Providence in former ages, and those he has taken now? They thought that the Godhead was like to silver, gold, or stone, graven by art and man's device. And the times of this ignorance God winked at, but now he commands all men every where to repent. Because he has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he has ordained; whereof he has given assurance to all men in raising him from the dead, Acts xvii. 29—31.

3. It is still more mysterious, that the Jews should reject a Saviour who was to be preached among the gentiles. This I mention only as an introduction to the following head; that he who was to be the "desire of all nations," should be the contempt of his own; for "he came to his own, and his own received him not." And when Moses is read, who testified of him, to this day the vail is upon their hearts, for they cannot see to the end of those things that were to be abolished, 2 Cor. iii. 15. All the preparations of sacrifice, worship, types and promises, were lost upon them. They searched the Scriptures, in hopes of finding eternal life; and yet though these were they that testified of him, they would not come unto him that they might have life. The chief priests, who had the best education and opportunity to know his character, the princes of the world, were strangers to the wisdom we preach, for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. These raged with an envy as high as their station; and the admirers of the temple-service, whose devotion should have led them towards him, pursued his doctrine and his life with all the violence they could use. "Israel which followed after the law of righteousness has not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law, for they stumbled at that stumbling-stone," Rom. ix. 31, 32. Now is it not much, that he who was to be the Saviour of the world, and bring a blessing to all the families of the earth, should be thus unknown in a country

where he had been expected? That he should find no faith where there had been so much vision? And yet,

4. After his disgrace from the Jews he is made the subject of our ministry. He said "I have laboured in vain, and have spent my strength for nought, yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God. And now, saith the Lord, who formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength. And he said, it is a light thing that thou shouldst be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel; I will also give thee for a light to the gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation to the end of the earth. Thus saith the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One, to him whom man despises, to him whom the nation abhors, to a servant of rulers; kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the Lord that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, and he shall choose thee. Thus saith the Lord, in an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee; and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, and to cause to inherit the desolate heritages," Isa. xlix. 4—8.

If we had considered the revelation of a Saviour, as an attempt made upon the world, how far it would take, we should think it in vain to go any further after this miscarriage among a chosen people. It was time to give up the design, as that which was never likely to succeed, or bring forth fruit to account. But this was no hinderance, for through the fall of the Jews, salvation is come to the gentiles, the diminishing of them was the riches of the world, Rom. xi. 11, 12. If they did not receive him, who had been waiting for him, and had conversed with him in types and shadows, how could it be expected that the uncultivated part of mankind should harbour a gospel of which they had no warning?

And yet so it was; for the usage he met with from the Jews, and which delivered his name to so much contempt among them, became a part of the doctrine which was preached among the gentiles, I mean his "obedience to death, even the death of the cross." It was an objection against him then, "He saved others, himself he cannot save. If he be the Christ of God, let him come down from the cross, and we will believe." As he did not come down, it was a protection to their infidelity. They then thought themselves justified to all the world, in calling him a deceiver; so that though he had done many miracles, and taught the will of God perfectly, yet this last reproach, his dying in a cursed way, razed out all his former character, and made every thing he had said or done pass for nothing.

And yet with this disadvantageous article did the apostles go out into the world. They made no secret of that death which the enemy derided. They preached Christ Jesus and him crucified. And is it not strange that a doctrine which startled the Jews, in the very sound, should be received by the gentiles? To a Jew such a principle must be proved. When they "opened and alleged that Christ must needs have suffered," it could be only out of their writings, but to the gentiles this was a thing totally unknown; they had no prophecies, no types or sacrifices of Divine appointment to be the figures of a propitiation to come, and yet with these inconceivable doctrines were preachers to go abroad. They were not ashamed of the cross of Christ, but gloried in it. Through that truth they declared a God who pardoned iniquity, transgression, and sin, and brought to the world the glad tidings of salvation and eternity.

And is it not much, that this article should make its way among the gentiles, which had been derided by the people who alone were prepared to receive it? That the stone rejected of the builders should be afterwards made the head of the corner; this is the doing of the Lord, and it is marvellous in our eyes. The Jews and the priests among them were the builders

by profession, and by distinction. They rejected a stone of the greatest value, and yet this is made the head of the corner; the ground of that whole building, which fitly framed together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord; the vast fabric that takes in the people of God all over the earth. And this is the doing of the Lord: so is every thing in providence, but it is his work in a more eminent sense, it expresses his wisdom, his sovereignty, and universal goodness, it is full of his glory, it bears his image, and it is wondrous in our eyes; in the very eyes of a believer it does not cease to be a mystery. They see something in it that shows the contrivance is to be rather admired than explained. We stand amazed at it, as that which carries up our thoughts so far, that we can neither get forwards nor backwards, can neither leave the subject with indifference, nor comprehend it with knowledge.

5. That Christ should be preached to the gentiles, is what he himself put a bar in the way of. He acted all along as a Jew, as "a minister of the circumcision." He submitted to their ordinances, worshipped at their temple, conversed only with them, never began the practice of that religion that was to obtain after his death. He continued an example of the ceremonial worship as long as he lived. He acquainted the poor woman of Canaan with the general rule of his practice, that he was "not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." He charged the seventy disciples "not to go into the way of the gentiles, or enter into any city or village of the Samaritans."

Who would think, by such a method of living, that he had any design of extending his gospel beyond his ministry? or that the one should go where the other never came? What pains did he take with the generation of his wrath? How did he pursue them with doctrines, strike them with miracles, do those works among them that never man did? and yet they hated both him and his Father. What a concern did he show for them at last, when he passed the great

sentence upon them; for "when he beheld the city, he wept over it, and said, O that thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes!" It is apparent, as he speaks by the prophet, that his bowels were turned within him, and his repentings kindled together. He knew not how to give them up, to make them "as Admah, and set them as Zeboim." None of this pity discovers itself to those that were then without Christ, "and aliens to the commonwealth of Israel." He never makes them one visit, or sends them one message; and yet that ungrateful nation, who had been so long his favourites, were to be cast off, and left to a spirit of slumber; and, on the other hand, the gentiles who seemed to have so little room in his thoughts, were to have the distinction of his love.

He orders the apostles to be his witnesses to the uttermost ends of the earth; and it is not unlikely that he might acquaint them with the success of their gospel as he did Paul, "make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem, for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me." Thus Paul says to the Jews at Rome, "well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet to our fathers, saying, Go unto this people and say, hearing ye shall hear and shall not understand, and seeing ye shall see and shall not perceive," i. e. they were to have the means of grace to no purpose: but "be it known unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the gentiles, and that they will hear it," Acts xxviii. 25—28.

It is strange he should act as if he never knew that before. Why did he not make a trial in his own lifetime, what good was to be done in those parts of the earth that had all along lain waste? Why did he not break up the fallow ground himself, but leave it all to be done by his disciples? He was the great subject of the ministry into which he put his servants, but in many cases he was not their example. They preach where he did not; they go where he would never come; and it is rather after his death than

during his life, that he "is to lighten the gentiles," and be a salvation "to the ends of the earth."

6. This was a thing never to be conceived of by the Jews. As their minds were blinded to a Saviour, so they were towards a gospel, and one great end of sending it into the world. The passages are plain enough, that he was to be the desire of all nations and the governor among them; that all the gathering of the people would be to him, and all the families of the earth blessed in him; that the barren who did not bear was to sing aloud, for more were the children of the desolate than of the married wife, Hag. ii. 7; Psal. xxii. 28; Gen. xlix. 10; Isa. liv. 1, 2. Such promises as these lie thick in the Old Testament, and yet when there is any mention of a design that way, the Jews received it as a piece of blasphemy or enthusiasm. Thus when Christ tells them, "Whither I go ye cannot come," what is their way of expounding it? "Whither will he go that we cannot find him? will he go and teach the gentiles, or to the dispersed among the gentiles?" You see by the latter part of that sentence, that they could hardly believe him guilty of so monstrous a thing as that he should go to teach the gentiles, but only the dispersed among them, the Jews who were scattered abroad.

What an offence was it that he should receive publicans, and eat with them? When Zaccheus invited him to his house, they were startled. This man is "gone to be a guest with a man that is a sinner." They did not mean one that is partaker of a polluted nature, for all are sinners in that sense; but a foreigner, a gentile, one that was defiled by his profession, who lay out of the pale of the church, and was a sinner by birth. They thought it quite wrong in a prophet, and much more in a Saviour, to go into the house of such a one. And the explication he gives was not very satisfactory to them, that this man "is also a son of Abraham." That title was founded on the real sense and meaning of the promise; but it would be very strange to those that heard it.

And you need be in no surprise, that after his death

the apostles drew all the enmity of the Jews upon them, whenever they talked of the extent of their own commission. Thus was Paul received in the defence that he made; he runs over a noble argument, full of learning and evidence; he gives them the story of his own conversion, a fact that could neither be denied nor borne down. But when he mentions the Divine order, "Depart, for I will send thee far hence unto the gentiles," it is said, "they gave him audience to this word, and then lifted up their voices, and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth; it is not fit that he should live," Acts xxii. 21, 22. The very naming of that design is what they could not endure; so far had pride possessed itself of every faculty, that they were incapable of thinking about such a matter, as if it was in their power to contradict that argument; "Is he the God of the Jews only, and not of the gentiles? yea, of the gentiles also."

They imagined that a conversation with these poor people was defiling, as Peter owns in his speech to Cornelius; "Ye know that it is unlawful for a Jew to keep company, or come to one of another nation." They make a heavy charge against Paul, and would deliver him over to the tumult of the people. "Men of Israel, help; this is the man who teaches all men every where against the law; and further, brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place." Though this is what they had but an imperfect evidence of, "for they had seen before with him in the city, Trophimus an Ephesian, whom they supposed Paul had brought into the temple." The cry moves the city, the people run together, and are going about to kill him. Such a mystery was this to those to whom God had committed the lively oracles, that they were not able to make it pass upon their minds, that there could be any mercy for the rest of the world.

7. It is what the apostles themselves came into very unwillingly; their thoughts were of a national cast as well as others; and this stuck by them a long time. For after his resurrection, when he tells them

they must "wait for the promise of the Father which they had heard of him," they immediately catch at that as a political mercy. "Lord wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" He answers them, "It is not for you to know the times or seasons, which the Father has put in his own power;" but then tells them, that this promise was for other ends, that they might be his "witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and to the uttermost part of the earth," Acts i. 6—8.

You find, after this, with what reluctance they went away further than their own country. The persecution that arose about Stephen was a means to scatter them to Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, "preaching the word to none but the Jews only." Philip about the same time is driven to Samaria, where he had mighty success, for many believed in the name of the Lord, and there was great joy in that city. Peter has a vision which brings him an account of his duty, and answers the arguments that he raised against it. For when he said upon the descending of that sheet that contained four footed beasts and creeping things, "Lord, I have never eaten any thing common or unclean:" the voice said to him, "What God has cleansed, call not thou common." This he knew not the meaning of till he went to Cornelius, and there he delivers the sense of the vision. "I perceive God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him," and says further, "God hath showed me that I should not call any man common," Acts x. 34, 35.

One would think there was very little need of these extraordinary methods to impress upon them so plain a duty as that of preaching to the gentiles; and yet the prejudice of education lay so deep, that it must be rooted out by an uncommon argument. Nay, the good people who attended him are amazed, when they saw the Holy Ghost descend upon the gentiles. What! could they imagine that the Holy Ghost was not a free agent? Had not Christ told

them, that "the wind bloweth where it listeth? Besides, Peter is forced to argue upon this conviction. "Can any man forbid water that these should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?" Nay, after this, the very apostles and brethren object it against him: "thou wentest to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them," Acts xi. 3. Upon which he is obliged to rehearse the matter from the beginning, and he reckons it no less than a withstanding of God, if he should have acted otherwise.

Saul had his commission at his conversion. Christ said to him, "I will deliver thee from the people, and the gentiles, to whom I now send thee, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins." And he comes readily into it, as he tells the king. "Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but showed first to them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea, and then to the gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance." We find indeed all along, that he made his first addresses to the Jews. When he came to Antioch in Pisidia, he got into one of their synagogues and introduces his discourse in this manner: "Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience;" and upon their refusal, he tells them, it was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken unto you; but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the gentiles; for so the Lord has commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the gentiles, that thou shouldst be for salvation to the ends of the earth." And as Christ had told him, that having borne witness for him at Jerusalem, he should also bear testimony for him at Rome; when he comes thither, he first sends for the Jews, and tells them, that though he had committed nothing against the people and customs of their fathers, yet he was delivered prisoner to the Romans; "for which cause,"

says he, "I have sent for you, to see and to speak with you, because for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain." And when he found his labours among them in vain, then he talks of turning to the gentiles. So that after that, "he dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in to him; preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things that concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence."

8. It is some part of the wonder, that the preaching among the gentiles should be put into such hands. "Are not these that speak Galileans? and how is it that we hear them speak in our own tongues the wonderful works of God?" Had he raised up at first, as he did afterwards, persons out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, who were acquainted with the language and methods of their own country, it had not been so much. But he makes choice of a company of Jews who were every where hated. "These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, and teach customs which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans." These he furnishes with all qualifications: they have the gift of tongues, by which they are endued with power from on high. This was a mighty wonder indeed, and therefore the apostle puts it upon the rewards of Christ for his sufferings; "being exalted by the right hand of God, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear."

Nor is it less remarkable that men of a private life should be called to stand it out against the face of the world. That persons of a low education, who were no way prepared for hurry and bustle, should come joyfully into a fatigue that carried in it all manner of dangers,—what can we ascribe this to, but the power of Christ resting upon them? "God bare them witness with signs, and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will," Heb. ii. 4. They were never either to be hired or daunted from their duty, but went through

honour and dishonour, good report and evil report, as deceivers, and yet true, as unknown, and yet well known, 2 Cor. vi. 8, 9. They were despised and misrepresented; and because their doctrine was unwelcome, their persons were hated. And indeed this is the constant lot of those that will be faithful. The apostle tells Timothy, there are "some who resist the truth, men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith." But, says he, by way of encouragement, "Thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions, which came to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra, what persecutions I endured; but out of them all the Lord delivered me," 2 Tim. iii. 10, 11.

This last particular may be distributed into several others that are contained in it: as, that he fetched men out of a private life into a service for which their education had no way prepared them; that he had made them run into dangers which they might have shunned, and that with the greatest alacrity and obedience; that he furnished them with the gift of tongues, which had never been known in the world before; and that he called most of them to seal the truth with their blood, that they might give the greatest testimony of nature to the doctrines of grace.

1. The persons he employed were no way prepared by education for that life of public service into which he called them. "He chose the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty: and base things of the world, and things which are despised, yea, things that are not, to bring to nought things that are; that no flesh should glory in his presence," 1 Cor. i. 27—29. He that had the earth, and the fulness thereof, could easily have supplied himself with the best of its learning; but it stands among the wonders and delights of a Saviour, that he went contrary to the expectations and measures of human reason.

That might be called a polite age with as much

truth as any other. The zeal of the Jews for the ritual part of devotion went higher than ever it had done. They rested in the law, and approved the things that were more excellent: they made their boast of God, and were confident that they themselves were guides of the blind, and instructors of the foolish, having a form of knowledge and of truth in the law. And yet, both in giving holiness, and granting commissions, he passes over men of shining parts, and vast attainments, and chooses his servants where no one else would have done. It is this, I say, that gave our dear Redeemer a pleasure at his very soul. "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight," Luke x. 21. He also affirms his own share in the great disposal. "All things are delivered to me of my Father, and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father, and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him." So that what is called the Father's making known these thing to babes in one verse, is called the Son's revealing them in another. And as he had ascribed it to the mere sovereign pleasure of God, so here it is represented as his own choice. It is the Son's own will that inclines him to make the revelation. It stands in this account as a free and spontaneous act. And he that made known these things is considered three ways, which are all wonderful.

First, That this was not owing to any scarcity in the creation, for he that does it is "Lord of heaven and earth." He could have committed the gospel, as he did the law, to the disposition of angels, being the sovereign of that upper world where they are; or he could have furnished himself from the schools of the gentiles, and the temple of the Jews, with men who were either mighty in the Scriptures, or masters in the faculty of turning an argument. But,

Secondly, Instead of employing them as necessary

to his cause, he threw a vail over their glory. "He hid these things from the wise and prudent;" they, above all others, fell at this stumbling-stone, as it was foretold that the foundation laid in Sion would be a rock of offence, a gin and a snare to both the houses of Israel, and the inhabitants in Jerusalem. None of the princes of this world knew the wisdom that we preach, as appears by their crucifying the Lord of glory. These men that were wise and prudent, not only in their own opinion, but in the public voice of fame, are all in the dark about the great article of salvation. And,

Thirdly, These things he reveals unto babes; sometimes to such as were literally so; for out of the mouths of sucklings he ordained strength, Psal. viii. 2. Of this he gave the world a sample at his triumphant entry into Jerusalem, when the children cried in the temple "Hosannah to the Son of David." But I believe the name that he calls them by signifies the lowness of their preparation, that they were no more fit for the design than so many babes: they were so far from speaking other tongues, that they could hardly speak their own. This is a thing that our Lord contemplates a long while before it was accomplished. He does not only acquiesce in it, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight," but it made him rejoice in spirit. Though but a little before, he had complained how vain his own attempts had been for the reformation of the world in Chorazin and Bethsaida, yet "in that hour" he felt all these joys within him.

And whom did he choose, but men of an obscure character? "Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" 1 Cor. i. 20, 21. How? by laying all aside in spreading the gospel. "For after that in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God; it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe." It was once reckoned wonderful, that he matched the employment of his servant in a private

life, to what he designed him for of a more public nature. "He chose David, and took him from the sheep folds; from following the ewes great with young, he brought him to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance." There is both a beauty and a surprise in the similitude. And so he did here. He calls a company of persons out of ships or boats where they were mending their nets, and tells them, he would make them "fishers of men." Upon this they forsook all and followed him: a strange call, and a strange obedience!

Moses, though he had been brought up at court, and was skilled in all the wisdom and learning of the Egyptians, cries out, "Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh?" He pleads his being of uncircumcised lips, by which, I suppose he means some unhappiness in his pronunciation; because God gives him this answer. "Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb? and I know that Aaron thy brother can speak well." But there is more room for the objection in a company of poor people who scarce ever went further than the lake of Tiberias. Might not they have thought it an extraordinary proposal to be told that they should go over the world, and confront the learning of all the places that they came into, by the success of their gospel, leading princes away spoiled, and making judges fools? Ye shall be brought, says their great Master, "before kings and rulers for my name's sake, and it shall turn to you for a testimony. Settle it therefore in your hearts not to meditate before what ye shall answer; for I will give a mouth and a wisdom which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist."

This was a surprise to the council at Jerusalem: "When they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled, and they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus." So that here, you see, they renew the questions that had been put about Christ himself. How knows this man letters, having

never learned? and, Is not this the carpenter's son; from whence then hath he these mighty works? And yet they perceived in them such a boldness as gave them a great deal more than a courage to speak; for that of itself is not always an excellency: but this took into it the several capacities of reasoning, that they spake with an evidence that was neither to be daunted nor evaded.

Was it likely, that in such hands as these, the greatest wisdom that was ever made known to the world should get forwards into the nations afar off, and, like the power of the sun, nothing should be hid from the heat that attended it? This is a mystery indeed, and shows the value of that effusion in which the Spirit was given out. For these disciples were very raw and unprepared, even after Christ's resurrection, to undertake a matter of so much importance. They did not understand the nature of that kingdom which they were to preach; but when they were endued with a power from on high, it was a sending forth both of light and truth. As our Lord tells them, "I have many things to say, but ye cannot bear them now; howbeit when he the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth." He made them ministers according to the gift of the grace of God, given to them by the effectual working of his power.

2. It is still further a mystery, in the way that God took to spread this gospel among the gentiles, that he should raise up these men to run all manner of dangers, who might have lived secure and protected. He set forth the apostles, as it were appointed to death; they were made a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men; fools for Christ's sake, weak and despised: they hungered and thirsted, were naked and buffetted, and had no certain dwelling place: they laboured, working with their own hands; reviled, persecuted, defamed, made the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things. And yet he dealt fairly by them. He gave them such warnings and instructions about the work, as would rather have frighted people than persuaded them into it. The time comes

that he that kills you will think he does God service; and these things they will do unto you, because they have not known the Father nor me. He tells Peter, in particular, When thou wast young, thou wentest whither thou wouldst, that part of thy life was easy enough; but when thou shalt be old, they shall bind thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not; and this he said signifying by what death he should glorify God.

But that very consideration of his death made it easy to him; he calls it no more than putting off this tabernacle, as the Lord Jesus Christ had showed to him. Another apostle says, this was his earnest expectation and desire, that in all things Christ might be magnified in his body, whether it be by life or death. Many of his followers, when he opened to them the hardships that were coming on, went back, and walked no more with him. Swarms of such as those have gone off in every age; Demas forsook Paul, and all they in Asia left him. But Christ knew whom he had chosen, and the virtue of that choice. There were many who hazarded their lives for the sake of the Lord Jesus. It is almost an indisputable maxim in our day, that take away preferments and rewards from preachers, and the church is in danger; but here are ministers that had not so much as a human protection. I hope then the number of hirelings in this age leaves us in no doubt of the *mystery* that ever Christ should be preached to the gentiles, by those who approved themselves the ministers of God in much patience, afflictions, necessities, distresses; in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults. This is well expressed by a poet of our own:

> Whence, but from heaven, could men, unskilled in arts,
> In several ages born, in several parts,
> Weave such agreeing truths? or how, or why,
> Should all conspire to cheat us with a lie?
> Unasked their pains, ungrateful their advice,
> Starving their gain, and martyrdom their price.

3. The great wonder of all is, that they should be qualified with the gift of tongues. This was a thing

never heard of before; it only came to pass in the last days. God usually employed his prophets in their own country, or in those neighbouring kingdoms where the language was much the same; but here are men sent to all nations, to every creature under heaven, and wherever they come, they have no need to speak by an interpreter, which is both a slow and a cold way of conversation. And this he designed to distinguish as a mystery, because it is the peculiarity of that age, and that set of preachers: for tongues were to cease, and this sort of knowledge to vanish away. As no generation had it before, so none had it after; for which we may give several reasons.

This was to be the handsel of a Redeemer's government below, and the first assurance of his welcome above. He had but newly left his disciples, not without the contempt of the world, and some diffidence in themselves. What they wanted to know was, whether his death which had been so scandalous on earth, had met with any more credit in heaven, and to be secure that his empire among men was established, and should be promoted. Well, this they are to be convinced of by such an effusion of the Spirit, as was never known to their fathers, and should never be renewed to their children. He being exalted by the right hand of God, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, shed forth that which they saw and heard. Thus the salvation, that began to be spoken to the world by the Lord Jesus, was afterwards confirmed by those that heard him, God bearing them witness by divers signs, and miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will. These tongues were to be for a sign that the commission was from God, and also a means of making known to the gentiles what was appointed for obedience of faith among all nations through the name of Christ.

At the building of Babel, which the sons of men designed for a tower to reach to heaven, God came down and confounded their language. This was a

new embarrassment to the truth; it was from that time a great deal harder for people to help one another in useful knowledge. But here was going to be another tower, that should actually reach to heaven, a building of God, a house not made with hands; he therefore comes down, and razes out the former confusion. Though the world continued to talk many languages, yet he furnished a set of men with capacities to speak them all. They spake with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. Thus many ran to and fro, and knowledge was increased. After the Lord had spoken to them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God; and they went forth, and preached every where.

4. He called most of them to seal this truth with their blood, which was the highest testimony that nature could give to what grace had taught. They overcame by the blood of the Lamb, and the word of their testimony; no terror could drive them from it. By their fall they conquered; their dying was voluntary, they loved not their lives unto the death. There was something else which they loved better. Now, this is so far from being a duty, that by the law of nature, it is the greatest of sins. It is also against all the course of nature; it overrules the first principle in it, and that is self-preservation. No man ever yet hated his own flesh, but loved and cherished it. And when any were witnesses to a cause that way, you must suppose they had in them either something below nature, or something above it.

And yet thus it was with them. Paul at his conversion was shown what great things he should suffer for the name of Christ: it was but a rough setting out, for the Jews to go about to kill him, as soon as he began to preach the Gospel. He had a narrow escape from Aretas the king of Damascus, when he was let down by the wall in a basket. He was thrown out of all the favour and fame that he had so long courted in the Jewish nation, and yet he looks back upon it with a noble unconcern: he counted it but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ

Jesus his Lord, for whom he had suffered the loss of all things, and counted them but dung, that he might win Christ. He was in labours abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times he received forty stripes save one. Thrice he was beaten with rods, once he was stoned, thrice he suffered shipwreck, a day and a night he was in the deep; in journeyings often; in perils of waters, robbers, by his own countrymen, heathen, in the city, the wilderness, the sea, and among false brethren. Nor did these things grieve and tire him out; but when the time of his departure is at hand, he is ready to be offered up, having fought a good fight, and finished his course, and kept the faith, without which all the rest had been impossible.

Now, let us see for whom they did this.

1. It is plain they took it for the cause of Christ.

2. They depended upon his presence with them.

3. This was as much as they could do for God, and as much as they could expect from him.

1. It is evident by all the profession they made, that this was for the sake of Christ. They were witnesses of him; they bore the testimony of Jesus, whom they preached, warning every man. Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? was the language of Saul. Ananias tells him, The Lord, even Jesus who appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, has sent me to thee that thou mightest know his will, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. He was to see that just One, and hear the word of his mouth, and be his witness to all men. The gospel that he preached was neither received of man, nor by man, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. To this purpose, saith our Saviour, have I appeared unto thee, to make thee a minister and a witness of these things that thou hast seen, and those in which I will further appear unto thee. He determined to know, or make known nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified; which in the former verse he had called the testimony of God. He preached not himself, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and himself a servant for Jesus' sake, still referring

the ultimate glory thither. Sometimes they were called the servants of God in the gospel of his Son, and the servants of the most high God, who showed the way of salvation. Thus saith Paul, God is my record, whom I serve with a pure conscience. But these expressions are so thrown in common with others, of our preaching, serving, and obeying Christ, that if they do not mean the same, here are two things unhappily confounded in one description. The gospel of Christ is called the power of God.

2. In this work they depended on *his* presence with them. He would not leave them comfortless, but come and see them. After his resurrection, the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. He spake to them forty days of things pertaining to the kingdom of God. This was delightful conversation indeed! They were afraid of the Jews, and had the doors shut; but when Jesus came in, those fears would soon be over. He might say then with more impression than he had done before, It is I, be not afraid. During that stage, between his coming out of the grave, and his going up into glory, they were raised above all their troubles. But, what should they do afterwards, when, as he tells them, they must see him no more? that is, they were to know him no more after the flesh.

Well, that they might be provided for all dangers, when he sends them to disciple all nations, he promises to be with them always to the end of the world. I do not envy our critics all their gains by the interpretation of these words, viz. that they signify no more than to the end of that age. For though that uncomfortable exposition may be easily dissolved, yet even this carries more in it than they would gladly allow. For according to their own way of reckoning, Christ might be present with the apostles after he was gone to heaven; that he could be both upon earth and in heaven at one time; and if he could do this for the space of forty years, he can as easily do it to the consummation of all things. It was this that carried the apostles through all their troubles. I will deliver thee, saith he to Paul, from the people, and the gentiles, to

whom I send thee. And when he speaks of the success of this promise that was given him by Christ, he calls it obtaining help from God. The one is plainly matched unto the other, being only two parts of the same speech.

3. This was as much duty as they could pay to the great God, and this presence as much as they could expect from him. Was it only a creature, for the advancing of whose kingdom there were such preparations made, as the world never knew before? Consider three things; he had the greatest glory that ever was given, the most entire duty that could ever be paid, and he maintained this interest in the most divine way that ever was heard of.

(1.) The glory designed for him was of the greatest sort. It exceeded all that could be fetched out of the creation. The heavens declare the glory of the Lord, and the firmament shows his handy-work. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night declares knowledge; and there is no voice or language where their speech is not heard. What Lord is this who has his honour so established in those bright and rolling worlds, but the Lord that made them? the Supreme Being, by whom are all things, and for whom are all things? The Scripture has shown us that this is his work, Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth, and the heaven is the work of thy hands.

And therefore that notion that the great God created the second person, and then ordered him to make the world, must be handled very gently, or it will be crushed before the moth. We read of no such round-about creation. The Bible represents all these things as done by his own voice; He spake and it was done, he commanded and it stood fast. By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the hosts of them by the breath of his mouth. We read of no such officer as the new scheme calls an instrument. We understand no other author of the universe than him who has the glory of it. Not an angel in heaven dare arrogate to himself the making of a worm, the rearing up of a plant; no, they talk of the world as

the immediate production of Omnipotence. Thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created. Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen, were not made of things that do appear. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who has created these things, that brings out their host by number; he calls them all by names, by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power.

But now there is a greater glory than this; that is, there is a nobler design, and a more wondrous performance—the redemption of a chosen people. The Scripture has given this the preference, and the honour of it is left upon Christ, not as exclusive of the Father, but in such a way as is maintained by what he saith, I am in the Father, and the Father in me. And again, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him; if God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself. He speaks this of the success of that great design that he came about. There is more of God to be seen in this affair than there was in any other, and where are we to look for it? Well, he that brought light out of darkness, gives us the light of the glory of God in the face or person of Jesus Christ.

And can we think that the Supreme God is to rejoice in the work of his hands, that the earth is full of his riches? Is he to be honoured in what we see he has done? And shall a glory much greater and more sublime be given to one who by nature is no God? Shall he who has the name only by virtue of an office have an extent of empire which the Father never claimed? Shall all the ends of the earth look unto the Son, and he be no more than a titular Deity, when the real God was only known in Judah, and had his name great in Israel? Must there be an effusion of the Spirit, a gift of tongues, a thing that never had been in the world before, and it is likely never shall be again, and all this to establish the interest of a creature? For it is Christ in whom all the seed of Israel are to be justified, and to glory.

The gospel of the kingdom is called the world to come, and methinks there is a dignity in the title; it was future to the Jews, it is the last dispensation that God will give, and it bears upon it the glory of the state above. Now it is observed, that to none of the angels has he put in subjection the world to come of which we speak. He has put kingdoms and armies in subjection to an angel, by making him the minister of Providence; but here is an affair that none of them must preside in. And can we imagine, that so much care should be taken to tell us, that not one of the angels has this dominion, and yet that it is given to another creature? If he is so very express and peremptory in laying aside the angels, we should have thought it was because he has so often said, His glory he will not give to another. And therefore how comes one who was less than an angel to have it, but from the consideration of a nature more above theirs than what he took upon him was below them? You find the angels praising God for creating the heavens and the earth, and the fountains of waters; and yet the Lamb is proclaimed as the author of a much greater work. The lower, the grosser glories are ascribed to the Supreme God, and will he communicate those to any beneath himself which are the fruit of a nobler contrivance? No. Christ Jesus is therefore made of God to us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, that according as it is written, he that glories, may glory in the Lord.

(2.) These people who preached Christ among the gentiles could never go further in their duty to the great God than they did to him. None of us, say they, lives to himself, and none dies to himself; for whether we live, we live unto the Lord; or whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether therefore we live or die, we are the Lord's. It is Jesus whom he speaks of as this Lord, as you see by the next words, "For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be the Lord both of dead and living." Thus the argument runs, "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify

God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's," 1 Cor. vi. 20. You are not your own, whose are you then? If being bought with a price makes you belong to another, it must be to him who paid that price. And who can that be? Or how are you to express his propriety in you, but by glorifying him as God, and looking upon your bodies and spirits to be his? They are said to be *God's*, and therefore if he who paid this price is not God, what he did gives him no claim upon us.

You see that this text will take a great deal of garbling to distinguish the shares of duty between the Father and the Son, if the one is the Supreme Being, and the other but a creature. Thus, when the apostle saith, it was his earnest expectation, his desire, his confidence, that, as at all times, so now, "Christ should be magnified in his body, whether it be by life or by death; for," saith he, "to me to live is Christ," Phil. i. 20; could he possibly go any further in a profession of duty to the Most High God? And has the Scripture been so lavish in claiming our service to Christ, that there is not the least degree more reserved for a Being that is infinitely greater than he?

Suppose we had never read any more than what the apostle preached at Athens, that they ought not to think the Godhead like unto gold or silver, or stone, graven with art and man's device, but look upon him as a Being that made the heavens, the earth, and the sea, and all things therein; one whose image we are, in whom we live, and move, and have our being. He adds, that this God has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that *man* whom he has ordained, whereof he has given assurance to all men, in that he has raised him from the dead. Had we never read any more of Christ than what he saith here, we might have thought him to be nothing higher than a *man*. Now it is not to the human nature that he has committed this judgment; for though he that is the judge is a man, yet he must be more for that design.

But why should he ever be represented as God? Why does the apostle in other places give him higher titles than he uses to these Athenians? The consequence of this can be only ensnaring us in our duty if he is not God; and, for my part, I shall have no regard to their new schemes, till they can tell me how far I am to go in my devotion to a Saviour, and where I am to stop. For the Scripture has made it very dangerous to love him too little. Such a one must be "anathema, maran-atha;" and I am sure it is idolatry to love him too much. And you need not say this is impossible, for if he is a creature, it is a very easy matter, and what the psalmist would have been afraid of, when he said, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth whom I desire besides thee."

(3.) Christ maintains his interest in the most Divine way, by a spiritual presence with his people; so that though his body is in heaven, he is still in every Christian; and we dare not say to any but God, "Thou compassest my path, and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thy hand upon me," Psal. cxxxix. 3. 5. The heavens have received him till the time of the restitution of all things, yet it is language peculiar to a God to say, "I will walk among them, and be in them." And we may soon suppose what sentiments Paul had of him, when he says, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me," Gal. ii. 20.

I am now to show you that this branch of Christianity enjoys the same beautiful character that is given of all the rest, that it is a mystery of *godliness*, and promotes a pure and undefiled religion before God and our Father. For this, was Christ himself a preacher of righteousness; for this did he ordain his witnesses among those he had chosen; for this, is the same faithful word committed to others, who are

charged to hold it fast, and to hold it forth. To this end is the word of salvation sent among you. We therefore insist upon a hope that is laid up for you in heaven, that it may bring forth fruit in you, as it does in all the world where it is heartily believed. And I think, this being the business of our preaching, the design of the ministry that we have received, it is supposed that, in order to fulfil it, we proclaim the Divinity of that glorious Person whose name is to be carried among the gentiles. "For," he says, "from the rising of the sun, even to the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the gentiles, and in every place incense shall be offered to *my* name, and a pure offering; for *my* name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of Hosts," Mal. i. 11.

If he is not God, we are sent upon a foolish errand, and tell the heathen no more than they imagine already, that there are supreme and subordinate deities. Perhaps, indeed, their number of under gods is greater than ours in the new scheme, but the substance of their religion is the very same with what some people have given us for primitive Christianity. They talk of a Trinity, by which they mean no more than one God, and two creatures. But "to whom will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One." Now as this is wide from the revelation that is given us in the gospel, so it is subversive of all that practice, by which we are to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour.

I will here endeavour to show you the different tendency of preaching Christ as the true God, and giving him only the name; and by comparing these two sorts of ministers, you will easily see which of them is most likely to promote the reformation of sinners, and the comfort of believers. And here, do not suppose that I am covering a cowardly design under a show of deceitful words. When I say that the Son is God, I mean as much by the title as if I applied it to the Father; and without such an upright unreserved way of talking, I should both impose upon you, and

betray the doctrines of the gospel. Now, I say, that they who in preaching "the unsearchable riches of Christ" tell the gentiles that he is truly, eternally, and supremely God, are most likely to attain the ends of the ministry of reconciliation that is committed to them. Because

These men speak plainly, we know what they mean; they come with a subject of their ministry that deserves to be so; the account they give us of the gospel revelation is most agreeable to the merciful nature of our God, who never designed to betray us into idolatry; it is such a report as answers the demand they make of our duty; it is harmonious to the nature of that dependence that we must have upon Christ; it provides for all the comfort we can stand in need of, and it gives a better prospect of the future glory when we know the person from whom we expect it is a God.

1. That minister who preaches up the Divinity of Christ, and tells the world plainly, that he is no other than the Most High God, is likely to promote religion among men, because he speaks out. We see, we know what he means. We are ministers "according to the faith of God's elect, and the *acknowledging* of the truth which is after godliness; in hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began; but hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed to us, according to the commandment of God our Saviour," Tit. i. 1—3. God never sent men abroad to shuffle with their learning, and make their skill in criticisms, original languages, and ancient writers, only an occasion to throw the world into the greatest uncertainties about the chief object of their faith and hope. "Should a wise man utter vain knowledge, and fill his belly with the east wind? Should he reason with unprofitable talk, or with speeches wherewith he can do no good?" Job xv. 2, 3. 5. Shall their mouth utter their iniquity, and they choose the tongue of the crafty?

Is that the fruit of studying Greek and Hebrew, of

turning over vast volumes of antiquity, that we shall grow more capable of unhinging mankind, removing them from their old foundation, without the honesty of showing them another? The Lord God gave to Christ "the tongue of the learned that he should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary," Isa. l. 4; not to set him a rambling in eternal mazes, by words that are never to be understood. Are those men of God's raising up, whose divinity goes no further than to strike off our faith from the person on whom it was fixed, and never tell us what is to become of it? Is that to be the result of all their inquiries, that they will use a good spirit, just as our Saviour says it fares with an evil one; that it is sent abroad, "seeking rest and finding none?" "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" No good end ever was answered, or ever can be, by those shuffling arts, that leave the hearer more uncertain than they found him. If my opinion is agreeable to the will of God, I may tell it boldly, for so I ought to speak. Seeing we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech; not putting a vail over our faces as Moses did; renouncing the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of the Lord deceitfully. The servants of such a master ought to use no disguise and no reserve; and for my part I can see no other end answered than to confound the world, when men are afraid to call our Saviour a creature, and yet take all the pains they can to prove him so.

What a scheme must that be, that allows him neither to be a God nor a creature? that explains away the first name, and trembles at giving the second? What is the reason that men do not speak out? Why must our doctrine be rejected for being mysterious and self-contradictory, when here is another put upon us that appears to be so at the first opening? How monstrous is it to talk of a created God? Or, of one that was not created, and yet had a beginning? Of a time that he was not, and yet that he is eternal? Of infinite perfections, and yet all derived? Of an Om-

niscience that does not know all things, and an Omnipotence that cannot do all things? Really this is not disputing about actions, but expressions; it is robbing us not only of doctrines but of words; it is using them in divinity, as they must be used no where else. "But we write no other things than what you read or acknowledge, and I trust you shall acknowledge even to the end," 2 Cor. i. 13.

Where is the necessity of a minister's doubling at this vile rate? Can we ever think that God sent out any of his servants upon such a foolish errand? Why must not mankind know what they mean? What good end can they propound to themselves, by deceiving people with confessions, and then explaining all the sense of them away; leading the world into a confidence of their believing what indeed they abhor, and only waiting for a proper season to laugh at the credulity of those they have imposed on? For my part, if I did not believe that Christ is "over all, God blessed for ever," in the same sense that the Father is so, I should think it my duty to preach back what I have been advancing among you; not call your faith to him, but call it from him. I durst not for any filthy lucre or fame, leave you at an uncertainty what I am speaking of, nor could I expect any blessing upon that sermon which gives such a character of Jesus Christ, that all the people who hear it, know not whether I am describing a God or a creature, as if I was raising up an altar with this inscription, "To the unknown God." It does not only leave you hovering about a truth, but at a full stand in your duty.

We bid you believe in him; but can any mortal determine what is meant by this faith, if he does not know the object upon which it is to fix? The apostles told their minds plainly in the face of as much danger as ever persons did; but as they were allowed of God, and put in trust with the gospel, so they spake not as pleasing men, but God that searches the hearts; neither did they at any time use flattering words, accommodating their doctrines to the humour of their

hearers, nor a cloak of covetousness. That opinion that is afraid of showing itself, does not look like truth. If you see any light twinkling, and then falling back again, sometimes out, and sometimes in, you may be sure it is not the sun, but a trifling vapour, that appears for a moment and then vanishes away. And as it comes out of a bog it will lead you into one. But I hope we are not as many who corrupt the word of God; but as of sincerity, as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ," 2 Cor. ii. 17.

2. They who preach up Christ as the Most High God, do insist upon such an object of their ministry as deserves to be so. What a poor business would it be for men to have a miraculous furniture and a miraculous vocation, the gift of tongues, and the continual guard of providence, and all this to make known a creature? that when they rejoiced so much in the title of being the servants of Christ, they should mean no more by it than their attachment to one who had nothing higher than derived perfections! Do they go and preach up one who is not to be adored?

That they speak of him in a nature that is not omnipotent, and must not be worshipped, that was dependent and passive, is true enough; but they have never been sent out into the world, to tell mankind that he was born and lived with our infirmities, that he died and was buried. No, they must be witnesses to these facts; but their being *servants* to him supposes a higher character, that he had in him a nature that had no beginning, no bounds, no pain, no death; therefore they might well talk of such a one to the world, because he made it: for "without him was not any thing made that was made."

Consider what it is to preach Christ Jesus. There is a homage in this work, which no creature has ever challenged from us. The vile way of the papists in running over the story of a saint, proposing him as a pattern, and offering his dry bones for the help of faith, is profane and foolish. "When they say to you, Seek to them that have familiar spirits, and to wizards, that peep and mutter; should not a people seek to

their God? for the living to the dead?" The root of such a doctrine is rottenness, and the blossom of it shall go up as dust. We may, and do mention the lives of ministers and eminent Christians, bidding you follow their faith, and consider the end of their conversation; but will any man call this preaching of Moses or Paul? Nay, the very angels who do us so many kind offices are not the subject of our ministry. We may preach of them as they are ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation, but that is not calling mankind to depend upon them. They will not allow us to do any thing that has the least resemblance of an adoration. The apostle John was much obliged to that angel whom Christ had sent with a revelation of things to come; he had led him through the apartments of the New Jerusalem; he had shown him that glorious city coming down from God out of heaven, and yet he will not allow the good man to fall down at his feet. I cannot imagine that the apostle designed him what we call religious worship; for you must think him grossly ignorant, if he could after all these discoveries confound his homage to God by giving it equally to him and to a creature; but he thought some degree of extraordinary respect ought to be shown, and this the angel will not suffer for that awful reason, "Worship thou God." Might he not easily have distinguished about worship as some do in our day, and said, There is a devotion that I pay to none but God, and this subordinate duty to thee is no breach of that? But the angel leaves no room for that whiffling talk; he intimates, that there is always to be the greatest and most visible distinction between our behaviour to God, and that to a creature, let him be never so glorious and benevolent.

Bring this to the case of our Saviour; if he was only a creature, he would always use the same freedom with his people that he did with the young man in the gospel, who took him for no more. "Why callest thou me good, there is none good but one; that is God." But when we preach him, it is in the same way that we preach the Father, that he is the Lord

of the ends of the earth, the God for whom are all things, and by whom are all things; we could not go out in the service of one less than he. The heathen shall never have it to say of us, as we may of their priests, that we are servants of those "who by nature are no gods." Angels themselves are preachers of this Saviour, and what can that be owing to? Not his taking upon him our nature, for that made him lower than they; not his having a created nature above them, for that would no more make him the object of their worship than their superiority to us makes them the object of ours; but they consider him as their author, and as their end, from whose hand they received their being, and to whose glory they must refer it. "For by him were all things created in heaven and in earth, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers, all things were created by him and for him, and he is before all things, and by him all things consist," Col. i. 16, 17. It is plain he speaks of him here under another nature from what he does in the next clause, that he is "the first begotten from the dead." That did not prove him before all things, because it happened in these last days.

No wonder that they who do not look upon him as a God, have more zeal against his Divinity than they have for his honour; that all their strength, and time, and learning, should not be to lead on our duty to a Saviour, but to limit it, to stun it, to confound it. They cannot be said to preach Christ Jesus, "warning every man, and teaching every man." They do warn every man indeed, not to look on him as a God, but they can hardly be said to teach every man; for "if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself for the battle?" and least of all do they think to "present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." No, really, if he is a creature there is no hopes of any perfection in him. It is said of a person who loves the light, that "he comes to the light, that it may be made manifest, that his deeds are wrought *in God;*" and I should be ashamed to talk of your perfection *in*

Christ, if I did not think it an expression of the same import and value. But be it known to you, that our ministry is not of deceit or guile. We speak of him who is the former of all things, and therefore are "not ashamed of the gospel of *Christ*, because it is the power of *God*." The apostle speaks of "the glorious gospel of the blessed God," that was committed to his trust, and adds in the same breath, "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has enabled me, putting me into the ministry," Rom. i. 16; 1 Tim. i. 11, 12.

3. This account agrees with the merciful nature of God, that he should tell us things without the least disguise. "The words of the Lord are pure words." He has called angels and kings by his own name, they are *gods;* but what a bar is there between his title and theirs? "Who in the heaven can be compared unto the Lord? who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the Lord?" The Scripture has thrown us into no danger of confounding the two sorts of deities. No mortal can say, if he worships a prince, that he takes him to be omniscient and eternal, though he is called a god.

The greatest affair that we can have upon our hands, is a devotion to him that made us; and therefore had he left us in the dark, whom to worship, and whom not, he had thrown his own glory under a cloud, and the souls of mankind into a snare. But it is written with all plainness, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." And how unhappy is it for us, that the duty we pay to Christ should go by the same name, and be expressed as if given in the same degree both in heaven and in earth, if he is not God?

To tell us that we ought to distinguish, is to tell us nothing to the purpose. The question is, whether the difference lies so plain, that he that runs may read it? It is but a poor answer, to say there are men of critical learning who can soften and curtail the greatest names that are given to a Saviour, and divest them of their greatest sense. What becomes of the ignorant, who are the more numerous part of the world?

Could they find it out in the Scripture Trinity, that the first person is Divine and adorable, the second Divine but not adorable, the third neither adorable nor Divine? Do not say, that it is not necessary for these to speak of a Trinity, a hypostatical union, or the imputation of another's righteousness; that a man may be very good and serious without entering into these speculations. How dangerous is an insinuation of this nature? Can a person be religious who worships he knows not what? who is at a loss whether Christ Jesus is the object of his reverence or no? who either does not know God, and glorify him *as God;* or, on the other hand, is serving a creature equally with the Creator, who is over all, blessed for ever?

A good man may be a believer, and yet at a loss about the object of his faith! The love of Christ constrains him, and yet he knows not who Christ is! "He thus judges, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died, that they who live, should not live to themselves, but to him that died for them and rose again." It is as much as could be said of the great God, that we *live to him*, and yet it is paid to one who by these men is supposed infinitely beneath him. But blessed be God, those good people who will suffer no deviations from their duty, are in no uncertainty about him to whom it is given; he is declared to be "the Son of God with power." They know in whom they have believed. As he is called God, they depend upon him with full confidence; and it is a pity that they who showed such a zeal for the gospel in all ages should be left in the dark, and be all along strangers to a truth that is now brought to light by men that are not much superior to them in holiness, whatever they are in politeness.

4. When we preach Christ as God, it answers the demand of your duty to him. We bid you pray to him, call upon him, trust in him, and wait for him; which is more than we durst do for a creature, because it is as much as we can do for a God. Had we preached under the Old Testament, we must have insisted upon the glory of God, and the faithfulness

of Moses; that the great God had revealed his will, and Moses was the person by whom the world should have it, and therefore they are to believe in the one according to what they hear of him by the other. But there would be no confounding of these two. Certainly we must talk in a very unhappy way, if any of our hearers should suppose we called for the same duty to Moses that we did to God.

And yet in this promiscuous manner do we speak of the Father and the Son. "Ye believe in God," said Christ, "believe also in me," John xiv. 1. We dare make no distinction, the words are plain, they need no changing: but upon such a text, others will bring in a Scripture consequence, though we may not; that is, they will apply a consequence to destroy the truth, and they are angry that we take such a method to maintain it. We are commanded by these men to bring plain words of Scripture without any human explication; when we do so, they will not let them stand, but strive to take off their native force and lustre by the very method of interpretation which they deny to others.

If Christ has not infinite perfections, what have we been doing among you? our preaching is in vain, and your faith in vain. We have argued, threatened, called, persuaded, besought you, to do what? to trust in a God that cannot save? in one that has a name, but is infinitely beneath the eternal nature? We ought to be afraid lest your faith should fix too low, and say as the apostle did, "Ye men of Israel, why gaze ye on us, as though we by our own power and holiness had made this man to walk." And so here, we should say, "It is true, Christ this Saviour was very pure in himself, and very kind to you; you are to love him as a friend, and admire him as the chiefest among ten thousand: but take care that you do not love him with all your heart, with all your mind, and with all your strength. Remember the grace that he gives, and the glory that he promises is not his own: he is only the servant, and therefore all your affec-

tions to him must be as much distinguished from worship, as a creature is distinguished from a God."

But, as you know, we have never talked at this rate, so I am persuaded it would strike every serious person with horror if we should, who could take the pulpit to be no better than the seat of the scornful. And yet thus we must have preached, if we had maintained any consistency in our notions, or any honesty to our people. I should think it my duty, if I had been preaching never so long about the glorious nature of the angels, and the innumerable offices of kindness they have done us, still to close all with a warning lest you should run into "a worshipping of angels." Now the danger would be greater, as Christ is more excellent than they; and therefore if he was not the proper object of our worship, we ought not to leave you in the snare.

5. This agrees to the nature of your dependence upon him. Our gospel tells us, there is "salvation in no other." And he himself said, "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." So that our whole regard is collected in him. There is no putting him off with a share of it, but he must have it all. And will he, who is a jealous God, and has plainly told us, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me," suffer all this plunder from a creature? Though an angel is a great deal better than a prince, yet I should sooner be admitted to trust in the latter than the former: for perhaps a vain foolish man would allow me in all the extravagance of my faith upon him; but an angel would immediately say, "See thou do it not;" and he must be very unworthy of the Divine favours to him if he did not so.

Now, if Christ Jesus is better than the angels, and still a creature, I should expect more zeal from Him than from them against any misapplication of my faith and duty. He of all others would never say, "Look unto me, and be ye saved all the ends of the earth," if he could not also say, "I am God, and there is none else," Isa. xlv. 22. It was Lucifer's

wickedness, when he was made the son of the morning, that he would "set his throne as the throne of God." The dignity of his nature was an aggravation of his crime; and so it would be in our blessed Lord. All his advancement above the angels obliges him more than them to secure the Divine honour entire by taking none of it to himself.

6. This provides for all the comfort that we can stand in need of. We have it in Christ, who said, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world gives, give I unto you. In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." This peace and joy come in a way of believing; our faith upon him fetches it down. And can we think that a creature is able to do all this? When David saith, "Strengthen me with strength in my soul," I cannot suppose but that he speaks of a Divine operation; something that none but a God can do. And do believers under the New Testament look any lower for their consolations than those under the Old? The Psalmist could say, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? my flesh and my heart fails; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." And have we One more in heaven besides him? Is ours a descending, a falling faith? Does it come down from its chief object, and find a partner with God? Do you think when the Apostle saith, "The Lord stood by me, and strengthened me," 2 Tim. iv. 17, he means any less than that God, who was the strength of David's heart? A creature may pity you, but a God, you are sure, is capable of helping you. Now Christ is He, whom having not seen, ye love, and in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with a joy unspeakable and full of glory, 1. Pet. i. 8.

7. This gives us a better prospect of the future glory: the end of your faith is the salvation of your souls. When we tell you of heaven, and you hear that life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel, it is Christ that must convey you thither: "I will come again," said he, "and receive you to

myself, that where I am, ye may be also." But how vain would it be to have this said of a creature? We find it hard enough to believe that "he is able to save to the utmost;" but if he was not a God, those difficulties would increase upon us. Our faith stands in the Lord, and in the power of his might, Eph. vi. 10.

We cannot tell but an angel is mighty enough to carry our souls through the air into the region of spirits, as it is said they did that of Lazarus; but on purpose to let us see what we have to trust to, our expectations are fixed a great deal higher. And when Christ saith, I will receive you to myself, I believe it is a promise equivalent to David's hope: "Thou wilt guide me by thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory." Do not think that he under the Old Testament had his dependence upon God, and that we in these better days have our faith and confidence in no more than a creature.

The application of this is what I have but little room for: I will, therefore, confine myself to these three particulars.

(1.) If it is God whom we preach to the gentiles, a God manifest in the flesh, then you may be very sure we have no reason to be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor ought you to be ashamed of those that are his prisoners, but be partakers of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God. Not but that we are like to meet with the same reproach among Christians, that the apostles did among the heathen. In preaching up the Deity of Christ Jesus, some are ready now to represent us as setters forth of strange gods.

Could we have been content to shun or amend the faith that was once delivered to the saints, the enemy would have had as little provocation as they have real ground for a volley of reproaches. We should never have been charged with setting up a human authority, or framing a court of inquisition, or depreciating the word of God. Men that depart from this doctrine, stand clear of these accusations, though it is

known well enough their scheme will never do in the bare language of Scripture. They have leave to talk of an originated God, and an improper eternity, and use as many barbarous terms as they please, without any blame for departing from the words of the Bible. What plain passages are there in the way, which they are forced to work themselves through with distinctions and expositions? This liberty of explaining a notion in them is free thinking; but in us it is laying aside the form of sound words. Well, my friends, the cause we are engaged in is worth all this, and a thousand times more; for if it is a God whom we preach, we know he both can and will maintain his interest, and he will also own his servants who have owned him; for such a one alone is head over all things unto the church, as he has the fulness of him that fills all in all.

(2.) Let us, upon this account, recommend ourselves to your friendship and hearty prayers. You see we are set for the defence of the gospel. Reproaches fly about of an unusual kind, and from an unsuspected quarter. Pray that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for all men have not faith. Suppose the enemy should prevail to stop our mouths, or pollute our integrity, and that you are brought to attend upon ministers, whose prudence will not suffer them to tell you that Christ is God; what would become of religion in your closets and your families? therefore suffer me to bespeak your kindness as the apostle does. "Pray for us, that God would open to us a door of utterance to speak the mystery of Christ, (for which I am also in bonds,) that I may make it manifest as I ought to speak," Col. iv. 3, 4.

(3.) It is from our preaching Christ as God, that we can have any hope that he is believed on in the world.

END OF VOLUME I.

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